

issue #1

graceless

a journal of the radical gothic

And the ground we walk is sacred
And every object lives
And every word we speak
Will punish or forgive
And the light inside your body
Will shine through history
Set fire to every prison
Set every dead man free

"The Sound Of Freedom"
Swans

cover photograph by Holger Karas

GRACELESS

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Contributors and Editors:
Libby Bulloff (www.exoskeletoncabaret.com), Kathleen Chausse, Jenly, Enola Dismay, Johann Elser, Holger Karas (www.seventh-sin.de), Margaret Killjoy (www.birdsbeforethestorm.net).

Graceless can be contacted at:
www.graceless.info
graceless@graceless.info

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Adobe Garamond Pro is our body font. Colwell HPLHS serves for our pullquotes and most of our headers. Tw Cen MT is used for bylines, footers, and some subheads. Univers 45 Light, modified, is used for a few headers.

CONTRIBUTE

The deadline for issue two is May 1st, 2011

At least at the moment, we aren't paying anyone involved in this project, least of all the editors. We are interested in creating a DIY culture, and we want you to be a part of it.

Writers

We are looking for non-fiction pieces that explore the darker side of the world from a radical point of view. Whether it is a scene report on squatted gothic dance clubs or DIY fashion guides, or things that haven't occurred to us to list as examples, we're quite likely interested.

We're potentially interest in fiction, as well, that is rather explicitly the work of the radical gothic.

And if you're a novelist comfortable with being associated with us and our mission, then we'd love to interview you.

Crafters & Tinkers

We would love to feature your work, particularly if you're interested in sharing a bit of how it is done.

Bands

We're looking for bands with goth and radical themes or members to interview. We don't care if all of your songs are political, we don't care if you're famous. If you're interesting, let us know.

Artists

We feature the art of various radical goths in short portfolios with bios and work. Once again, the art itself doesn't need to be politically-themed. Unfortunately, the interior of the magazine is black and white, so we're looking for work intended to be displayed in monochrome.

Reviews

We are interested in reviewing: music and art shows, albums, books, magazines, zines, and anything that is appropriate for our stated purpose and our audience.

submit proposals and/or finished work to:
GRACELESS@GRACELESS.INFO

THE RADICAL GOTHIC

Radical

When we say "radical," we are not speaking of a specific ideology, but we're also not talking about politics like who's gonna vote for whom. Radical means, to us as well as the dictionary, "affecting the fundamental nature." **We've as little interest in mainstream politics as we do in mainstream culture.** We're looking to transform our society and our lives on a fundamental level. And while we are not interested, as a journal, in promoting one specific methodology, our focus is broadly anti-authoritarian and probably tinged with left and post-left ideas. We are staunchly opposed to fascism and right-wing politics in general.

Gothic

Everything dark belongs to us. When we say "gothic," we don't mean to speak to a specific little sub-category of a genre. **Musically, we mean industrial, gothic, darkwave, cold-wave, neo-folk, powernoise, alt-country, EBM, futurepop, black and gothic metal. We mean genres that don't exist and we mean music that hasn't been made yet.** We've interest in the occult and we're interested in the cold, dark of atheism. We're interested in the Romantics and of course, the gothic.

The Radical Gothic

The radical gothic is the acceptance of the world as it is—dark and horrid, full of wanton cruelty—without denying the world as we might make it: dark and beautiful.

The radical gothic rejects the myth of consumer identity, that our purchases—or what we wear—define us. But at the same time, it recognizes that aesthetics are a valid form of expression.

The radical gothic is the acceptance of responsibility that grants us the freedom to define ourselves, our own lives and our own society.

From The Editor

For the past decade, I've lived two lives. I've been a goth and I've been an anarchist. Luckily for me, black clothes and a mohawk will do just fine for both. In fact, there's always been a ton of overlap between these cultures: gender-bending, queer positivity, sex positivity, veganism, atheism/antitheism/paganism, DIY. But still, my world has always been split.

I told my punk friends in Germany last summer that I was heading off for a weekend to attend Wave-Gotik-Treffen, a goth festival. "Why?" they asked. "Goths are all either apolitical or right-wing." And this wasn't the first time I'd heard that.

From the other side of things, I'd hear that radicals are all either boring, preachy activists or cliquish, elitist punks.

Unable to prove my point that the radical gothic exists—hell, that it's the foundation of gothic culture—I kept these two parts of myself separate.

I live mostly in the anarcho-punk-traveler world. I used to listen to VNV Nation quietly in my room while folk punk blasted in the kitchen. I admit it: I was embarrassed to be heard listening to Faith & The Muse. Somehow, my peers had convinced me (without really trying, to be fair), that goth music was cheesy. Sure, I could get away with listening to something "tough" like Swans or "punk" like New Model Army, but I was shy about Wolfsheim.

With age came self-confidence, and I outed myself. I'd put on my music in the living room and let people deal. (If I have to listen to Ghost Mice, it's only fair.) And what I found, right away, is that I wasn't alone. I met dozens of anarcho-goths wilting away in punk houses, trapped in the spooky closet. I met Earth First!ers who'd break from treesitting to go to club nights in the city. I met squatters who could translate Einstürzende Neubauten lyrics for me. I met train-hoppers with corsets in their packs and I met facially-tattooed young women who lived under bridges. I met older activists and writers who'd wax nostalgic for the goth scene of yore, when the politics had infused the lyrics and the lifestyle both.

As I've started getting out more to the clubs and the candlelit basement shows, I've found that it goes both ways: there are plenty of goths with radical politics, who see their dark culture as not just as a sanctuary from the status quo, but as a stronghold from which to plot against the machines of misery that rule this world. This radical thread has been there this whole time, buried under the growing commercialism of our scene. It is vibrant and alive, and I would argue that the entire subculture survives off of this strain of beauty—that without a radical questioning of the world around us, the gothic life is bitter and hollow. That is not to say I believe that every song needs to be a call for revolution. Not every moment of our life need be in conflict with the mainstream. (Here's a secret, actually: one of the best parts about hanging out with other radicals is that we don't have to talk about politics.) Rather, I intend to point out that it is the offer of a society other than the nightmarish one we were born into that gives our culture such allure.

I'm tired of living in two worlds.

This magazine is my love letter to goth, that finest and most remarkable of cultures, that raven-haired, androgynous beauty who has captivated me for over half my life. Let's run away together. Let's not be trapped by what society expects of us. With you by my side, I would face any peril that might await us.

Through the yearlong process of getting this first issue out (first issues always take longer than subsequent ones, I've learned), I've found plenty of contributors who have wound up editors and friends. Like most any project worth doing, *Graceless* quickly became a shared vision. Although I took the lead editorial position on this first issue, an international collective has formed to see it continue.

Graceless is a journal rather than a book because a journal doesn't claim to be the last word on a subject. (Not every book makes that claim, of course, but it lies implicit in the format.) The radical gothic is a breathing culture that will hopefully outlive us all. And, well, *Graceless* is a journal instead of a proper magazine because none of us are yet in a position where we can commit to the regular publishing schedule necessary to keep up with our rapidly-changing culture. We're aiming for every six months, however.

We don't intend to serve as a one-way conduit of information, either. We're looking for everyone who shares our passions to consider contributing what they can, whether it be material for the magazine or by helping spread the word-of-mouth. We're looking for feedback: how can we be useful? What would you like to learn, to read?

In this issue, we've gathered interviews with bands across the spectrum, from giants of the scene who are still fiercely DIY like Attrition and Jarboe to fledgling projects like Rosa Apátrida. We've interviewed role-playing game writers and zine writers. We've collected manifestos ranging from a call to decadence to a summons into the gutters. We have articles analyzing the state of our scene in the United States and Germany. An overview of the radical gothic and an overview of subcultures that have fought for their lives against tyrannous regimes like the Tsars, the Third Reich, and the US government.

But we're also interested in celebrating the dark arts and aesthetics for their own sake, so we've featured photographers and explorations of literature.

I can't say I agree with every word written by every contributor, but that is part of the point: we have no desire to present to you a single solution, no desire to sell you an ideology. We've only a desire to invigorate people who want to question our society and find their own answers.

—Margaret Killjoy

CONTENTS

Interviews

Attrition 16
Unwoman. 20
The New Heaven & The New Earth. 42
Everything Goes Cold 50
Posthuman Studios 54
The Burnt Library. 62
The Horror, The Horror 80
Tedb0t. 84
Jarboe. 96
Rosa Apátrida. 106

Editorials

Perennial Decay: *Decadent Politics* 6
Misogygoth, Or: *Goth Misogyny* 38
Gothic Consumption. 46
Blah, Blah, You're Not Unique 52
We Are Crud Goth 70
Aufgebaut aus Eingestürztem:
An Expatriate's Guide
To DIY Goth In Germany. 74
Your Goth Is Dead:
The Rise And Fall Of Goth In America 86

Articles

A Radical's Guide To Spooky Music 8
How To Start A DIY Goth Night 14
Dressed To Kill: *Illegal Dandyism* 24
Jeepers Creepers!
The Dark Side Of Victorian Children's Tales . . . 64
The Pawn Revolts: *German Expressionist Horror* . . . 72
Flowers of Antimony 98

Featured Artists

Holger Karas, Photographer. 30
Marc17, Photographer 90

Et Cetera

The Antichrist 116

Perennial Decay:

DECADENT POLITICS

Decadence—the aesthetics of decay, the embodiment of deranged but heightened senses—is an undeniably political stance. The romantic can never find satisfaction in the truly dead worlds of the suburban subdivision or the garish fluorescence of the stripmall. Those that seek the whispering splendors of the sepulcher are the ones who seek to live despite the throngs of the lifeless surrounding them. The zombies wear business suits, and they are not satiated only with the brains of the living; they also hunger for our hearts and souls. There is a difference between the cobwebbed and entombed wilted rose and the styrofoam trash that spills from the McDonald's dumpster. They are both discarded and left behind, but one whispers of a once-living and the other never knew true existence.

All politics is a form of imagining. It's a truly creative act, in that it seeks to reanimate the world. We are like poor Roderick Usher, shuffling through society in silken slippers, alone in our ability to hear the decay of the house we have inherited. It will surely fall, that is beyond question, the only question is: will we be entombed by the plastic rubble, or will we face our own sister who we have unknowingly encrypted alive and out of sight? Who is this sisterly wraith we cannot ignore, she who rattles the crypt's gate and calls our names through crumbling linoleum halls? She is no other than our own liberation, our abandoned political spirit.

Decadent politics is the realization that today's real-politic is in ruins. The poetry of liberation has been replaced with paranoid legislation. Restriction has attempted to bottle the imagination and suffocate our freedom. To reject politics is to grow a "vicious garden" that consumes itself and leaves us in the sand.

Politicians have a similar relationship to politics as record executives do to music: they are parasites, seeking a vulture's feast on our living desires. Only the timid, those who say their evening prayers and wait for dawn, allow themselves to be without politics. Politics is not the choosing the evil of two lessers, but becoming truly ungovernable. Only in this space, this electoral darkness, can we be allowed to fully create not just art, but our lives.

If these politics are necessary for us, then how do we conjure them into being? Where do we find this dire conspiracy that allows us freedom?

Foolishly, some of our brothers and sisters have turned to the hollow pageantry of fascism, which is the very opposite of a decadent politics. Fascism is the politics of the high-school bully, brutishness disguised as power.

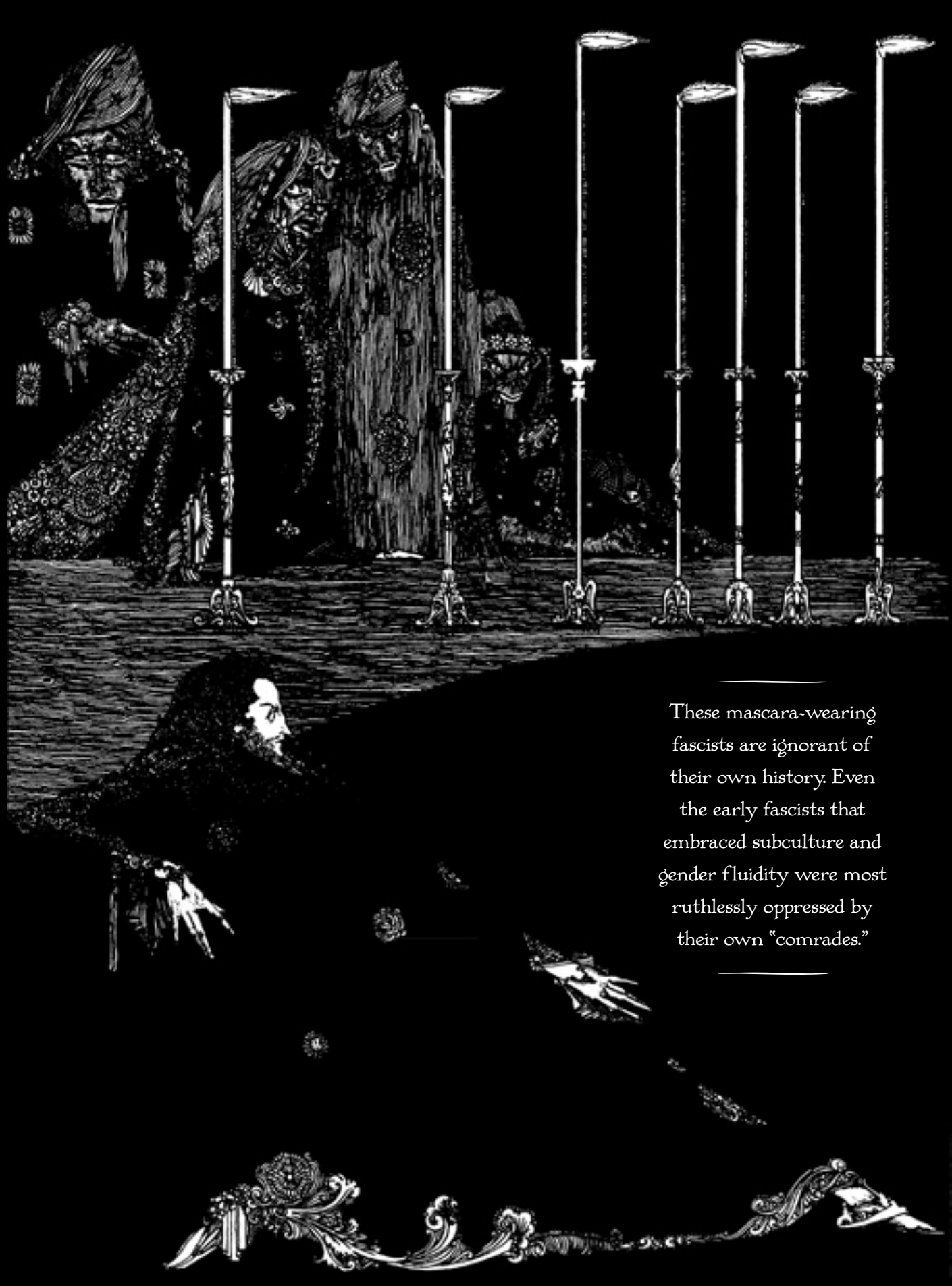
Some of the ugliest aspects of fascism—intolerance, repression, and violence—were fueled by what fascists saw as a morally justified struggle against "decadence." For fascists, decadence meant a number of things: materialism, self-indulgence, hedonism, cowardice, and physical and moral softness. The brown-and-black shirts associated this decadent worldview with rationalism; skepticism; atheism; humanitarianism; and political, economic, and gender democracy. The history of fascism, whether in Italy, Spain, or Germany always begins with the same bestial violence against decadence—the burning of depraved books, the smashing of nightclubs, and histrionic attacks on anyone refusing to conform to their boorish representation of gender norms. So one may ask, what does this intolerant thuggery have to do with the goth milleu? The answer is that it is its enemy and always has been. Despite this, there are those fascists in lace clothing that insist they go together.

These mascara-wearing fascists are ignorant of their own history. Even the early fascists that embraced subculture and gender fluidity were most ruthlessly oppressed by their own "comrades." The Night of Long Knives exorcised homosexual and other deviant elements from the Nazi Party with a merciless but unsurprising bloodletting. Among the first off to the concentration camps were not Jews or Gypsies but fellow occultists who had supported Hitler's rise to power. Mussolini imprisoned the avant-garde artists who had joined him on his march to Rome within a year of taking power. All of these groups fatally misunderstood the irreconcilability of free expression with the homicidal conformity of fascism. Today there are those that say fascism is simply fashion, that to strut around in a SS uniform and festoon our lace with the Nazi death-head skulls is meaningless and should cause no concern. Saying this is to ignore what they represent on a symbolic level. We would never wear a McDonald's golden arches to a goth club because it represents mass conformity. So does the iron cross.

Fascism is just another face of the same deadening, lifeless politics used by all the parties that seek to control and regulate our passions. It is reasonable—and understandable—that so many in our community have simply rejected all politics, but discounting politics cuts us off from our own imagination and liberation. We can and must imagine a politic outside parties, a politic that is uncontrollable and capable of creating monstrous manifestos of fierce freedom that threaten the Empire of Plastic. We know behind this soulless, shiny façade lies the beauty of haunted, living ruins. In the shadows grows a raucous resistance of the imagination threatening the bully and the banker as the lights start to dim. Entropy is our platform and freedom is our secret conspiracy from which we can never be dissuaded.

Everything dies. Even Ozymandias is in ruins. Though those among the status quo fear this impending and inevitable end, we are preparing ourselves to dance at its funeral.

Decadence, the celebration of decay, has a politic and its name is anarchy.



These mascara-wearing fascists are ignorant of their own history. Even the early fascists that embraced subculture and gender fluidity were most ruthlessly oppressed by their own "comrades."

A RADICAL'S GUIDE TO SPOOKY MUSIC



"Burn the empires down / There is no heaven." —Snog

"I declare war on every government / War against all odds" —KMFDM

"I dare you to speak of your despise / For bureaucracy, hypocrisy—all liars" —Bauhaus

I'm tired as hell of people in the radical scene telling me that goth isn't political. And it's funny… I thought I'd get a lot of shit from goths, as well, who would tell me the same thing. But by and large, they haven't. Because they know. Dark music and its attendant culture has always been a radical thing, and there have always been politics floating throughout it. I am going to use the word "goth" as a catch-all for the whole of the dark set. In German it's called *die schwarze Szene*, meaning "the black scene," but that literal translation won't do me in the US much good. So "goth" it is, at least for this article.

And when I speak of politics, of course, I feel it important to say that I'm not speaking about who someone might want to vote for, about gun control or gays in the military. One of the strengths of the radical gothic is that even as it explores ways of structuring societies, ways of resisting against oppression, and ways of freeing ourselves and our friends, it rarely does so in an ideological way. That is to say, it rarely says "This is what should work for everyone. Put me in charge, and I'll get things sorted right off."

Some of the best radical goth music is rather subtle, and in fact I would argue that this is one of the strengths of the genre. Subtle messages might be more open to interpretation, encouraging the listener to do with it what they feel is best. But some of it, which I explore below, is much more direct.

KMFDM, one of the most famous industrial bands, does not shy away from politics. The classic tracks "Glory" and "Anarchy" are a decent start, and "Rebels In Control" is dedicated to Wikileaks and the Anonymous attacks on MasterCard and PayPal, but perhaps the most interesting piece of theirs is the album *WWIII*. In an interview with Mister Bill of *Dark Sonus*, Sascha Konietzko says of the album's name:

> "There's been a war going on for a long time that has gone un-noticed, especially by the American general public, a war that manifests itself in economic abuse, world globalization, and exploitation of masses worldwide for the benefit of the few very rich and wealthy powerful people. WWIII isn't necessarily a war that is only fought with grenades and guns and bombs and smart weaponry, but it's also a war that's fought on the back of the majority of people on this planet. Nobody ever addresses the war in Sudan, which has been going on for 30 years and has cost millions of lives. Nobody was really interested in the war in Yugoslavia, basically our good neighbors. Genocide was basically right in front of your doorstep and people wouldn't say anything or do anything. That's WWIII. It's the war that's been going on and hasn't been named yet."

When I was a young teenager, older friends gave me two tapes that stuck with me: *Psalm 69* by **Ministry** and a mix of **Skinny Puppy** songs. They were perhaps my first taste of music that never saw radio play, and I listen to both bands still. Ministry attacks Bush Sr. with songs like "N.W.O." and Bush Jr. with "No W." Skinny Puppy is, in many regards, an animal-rights-themed band, with songs like "Ode 2 Grvy" and "Testure" against vivisection. And of course, they know the problem doesn't end there; in an interview with *Sick Among The Pure*, Skinny Puppy's Ogre said:

> "America has modeled itself after the idea of a republic, but it's becoming an empire. It's moving toward an empire which takes away a lot of freedom, you know what I mean? It's like, 'We are the world.' I see America as managing people in the way that China is now. They are creating this self economy of people that live off of fast foods, super size food, this high processed food....
>
> "I don't know if I believe in the political system in America … the idea of a two-party system is just something to give the perceived idea of choice to the population."

Sisters of Mercy's Andrew Eldritch told Virgin.net that:

> "I hold a British passport but my official residence is in the Netherlands. I am traditionally a Labour supporter despite my anarcho-syndicalist tendencies. Anarcho-syndicalism is all very well, but, as they say, 'You can't get there from here.'"

The song "Lucretia My Reflection," with its line "We have the empire, now as then," seems fairly obviously political to me, but you find even more explicit lyrics in Eldritch's side project **The Sisterhood**, who's song "Colours" says only: "You reap as you sow/Turn your face to the ground/Here come your marching men/With your colours wrapped around," referring to dead soldiers returning from war in caskets draped with the national flag. The Sisters of Mercy also toured with radical hip-hop act

Public Enemy in 1991, but many towns canceled the dates fearing racial clashes among the fans. Another quote worth repeating from Mr. Eldritch from the virgin.net interview:

> "The citizen is becoming a pawn in a game where nobody knows the rules, where everybody consequently doubts that there are rules at all, and where the vocabulary has been diminished to such an extent that nobody is even sure what the game is all about."

Swans—one of the most influential bands that has ever existed—may cloud their politics in metaphor, but only partially. Try listening to "God Loves America," "The Sound Of Freedom," or the entirety of their new album *My Father Will Guide Me Up A Rope To The Sky*. Michael Gira's (of the Swans) side project **Angels Of Light** sing "Destroyer," one of the two best environmentalist songs I've ever heard. The other is ex-Swans singer **Jarboe**'s "Overthrown."

Bauhaus sings "Double Dare," with the lyrics: "I dare you to speak of your despise / For bureaucracy, hypocrisy—all liars."

Joy Division's "They Walked In Line" is an explicitly anti-militarist as it gets: "All dressed in uniforms so fine / They drank and killed to pass the time / Wearing the shame of all their crimes / With measured steps, they walked in line." The band's name itself is a reference to the corps of young women kept for the pleasure of concentration camp officers. Of course, confusing matters, their first album naively featured an illustration of a Hilter Youth drummer on the cover, but Joy Division played at 1978's Rock Against Racism and at an Amnesty International benefit concert.

William Faith and Monica Richards of **Faith & The Muse** make no efforts to hide their politics, running a permacultured animal sanctuary, Ars Terra, outside of LA. I met William Faith while he wore a circle-A "support the ALF" [Animal Liberation Front] shirt, and spoken interludes touching on issues of gothic community are part of their live sets. **Monica Richards**' solo album has political themes as well, and there's a video online of her singing "Meat Is Murder" with anarcho-punk legends Conflict. She's also the author of the *Anafae* line of radical graphic novels.

Gothic diva **Diamanda Galas**, in addition to having a voice of singular beauty and power, has been a committed AIDS activist for three decades. Her cover of "Let My People Go" is a radical gothic dream.

Coil covered Soft Cell's "Tainted Love," but with their video turned it into a song addressing the suffering of AIDS patients.

Dark cabaret goth comedian **Voltaire**'s *To The Bottom Of The Sea* is an album themed around peasant revolution and includes the anti-consumerist song "The Industrial Revolution (and how it ruined my life)." His song "Crusade" is a simple anti-war parable.

Rasputina have plenty of feminist songs like "Girls' School," "Leachwife," and their cover of Leslie Gore's "You Don't Own Me." They also sing of historical events, like in the song "My Little Shirtwaist Fire," about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in NYC in 1911 when 146 garment workers, locked into their sweatshop, burned alive. Their song "Herb Girls Of Birkenau," is about children in concentration camps. And the whole of their album *Oh Perilous World* is an exploration and critique of contemporary events, singing "Child Soldier Rebellion," or "In Old Yellowcake," which references the yellowcake forgeries used to justify the 2003 US invasion of Iraq.

Goth rockers **Skeletal Family** sing "Don't Be Denied," about the need to "fight for justice and peace."

Deathline International covers The Vibrators song "Troops Of Tomorrow" changing its chorus to "we need a revolution" from "we need a new solution."

Sean Brennan of **London After Midnight** is outspoken in his support of animal and human rights, and drops subtlety entirely with songs like "America's A Fucking Disease."

New Model Army has been singing politically-charged gothic punk rock since the eighties, and they have in many ways helped shape my worldview. "Here Comes The War" is one of my favorite songs of all time, and is a remarkably blunt yet nuanced political song. The entire *Thunder And Consolation* album is of particular political note. And Justin Sullivan, the band's singer, tells the audience at shows that protest is something that everyone should be involved in.

Cop Shoot Cop is called Cop Shoot Cop. They also sing the delicious "$10 Bill" that gets at working-class anti-landlord and anti-consumerist ideas.

Attrition, interviewed in this issue, speaks out on animal and human issues.

Covenant makes no bones about their politics, with songs like "We Want Revolution," "Brave New World," and "Happy Man."

Taktical Sekt writes industrial music against environmental destruction, war, and genetic engineering, with songs like "Damage Limitation" and "Xfixiation." From its MySpace:

> "[Taktical Sekt] has become discontent with guile. We will not stand by and watch the world eat itself up with its desire to play the part of God and forcing nature's hand to create the monstrosity that is immortality or the "perfect" child. Playing with the power of the human gene. Sentencing our fellow men to death."

Birmingham 6 are in the same camp, with songs like "You Cannot Walk Here" and "Policestate." They are named after a group of Irish political prisoners.

The band **Consolidated** was actually pretty over-the-top with their politics, covering a wide range of radical and progressive issues.

Ego Likeness has the anti-racist anthem (and title track to an album) "Breedless."

Bruno Kramm of **Das Ich**, well known for its anti-western-religion lyrical content, told *Sick Among The Pure* that:



"[The United States] changes more and more into a totalitarian regime. Capitalism and Christianity are partners again, like they were in the Middle Ages. We are waiting for the burning stakes! But today they have the mass controlling systems through inter- and intranets. It is like Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, but even worse. Your government tries to keep the public interest by posing the threat of so-called radical states in the near East, explaining the Axis of Evil and drawing the line for the next war between religions and social systems only for one reason: they want to hide the fact that their own system has started to collapse.

"The U.S. and its economy is a blown-up system of prosperity that needs growth that doesn't exist anymore. The U.S. tries to stabilize itself by creating needs in military economies just to make the economy grow again. They do not let you see how the system is already collapsed on many levels from social to medical to intellectual."

Listen to **Die Warzau**'s "Insect," or read what they posted on their MySpace blog:

> "Yet, over and over again, we seem comfortable with electing, as leaders, mediocre people with mediocre ideas, hoping somehow that they will be enough to solve our problems.
>
> "And when they fail to come up with [a] plan that works, we are somehow surprised. We're just blown away that small ideas dragged from the beginning of man's history can accomplish the goal of creating a real peace—a real safety. When a small president with small ideas announces a war on terrorism, we forget to notice that war, possibly one of the oldest ideas we have, IS a form of terrorism for the people unfortunate enough to be right in front of it.
>
> […]
>
> "Here's a big idea. Make the war on terror not an old-school war where people are bludgeoned, beat,

shot, etc. Make war on the idea of terror by making war on the idea of what is truly terrible—hunger. And when every parent on this planet puts their child to bed the next night with a full stomach, that is when our children will begin to be safer, too."

Snog has been making explicitly anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, and anti-consumerist industrial music since 1988 and show no signs of stopping.

The Terror EBM act **Hocico**, from Mexico, has great songs like "The Shape Of Things To Come" and "Starving Children." They've pointed out, though, that they're not out to change people's minds: "No, we won't change something or someone. The people should find out alone. We only want to show our personal point of view. If they agree, good, if not, it's good too. It's better if people think about that themselves." Which is a common thing to hear from even more political gothic bands: they are expressing themselves, and that might have an influence, but they are not looking to brainwash anyone.

Tyler Newman of **Battery Cage** released the political album *World Wide Wasteland*, and told *NeuroZine* in an interview:

> "The name Battery Cage was chosen for its animal rights meaning. I've sort of moved out of using political topics for songs, but the song "Caged," which appears on both our records is of course very animal rights related. I am vegan, so I prefer to let my actions speak for me, rather than just singing a bunch of things that may or may not convince people to agree with my ideas."

VNV Nation's "Carbon" is an anti-climate-change anthem. They use futurist imagery—imagery also used by historical fascists—but VNV Nation is no fascist band. Ronan of VNV has stated explicitly that the song "Honour" (a song that is occasionally interpreted as pro-war or even pro-fascism by those simpletons who want to believe in Nationalism) is an anti-war song. And in a 2001 interview with *Dark Entries* he said:

> "I also think that people together, if they knew their power, could actually make the world a better place, no point and sitting down and moaning about how everything is.
>
> [...]
>
> "What amazes me about humans, and the stupidity of humans is that people are more worried and concerned about never being seen by their peers as Birkenstock-wearing, granola eating hippies, that they would rather shy away from environmentalism, because it's this 'Hippy, disgusting thing' that they'd rather not be involved in because 'I don't want to look like people with bad dreads and rings through their noses who go to G8 conferences and start throwing petrol bombs.'
>
> [...]
>
> "Terrorism existed in Ireland for us to free ourselves, but nobody said 'Oh, but we must stop this terrible affliction of Humanity.' I have a feeling that somebody is trying to impose the new world order—just as somebody's father used to be very big on that idea (strange, that!). I think the basic

A 2008 survey of the readers of gothic culture magazine *Morbid Outlook* (with only 68 respondents, however) found liberals in the lead at 38.2%, followed by libertarians at 16.2%, anarchists at 14.7%, and communists at 8.8%. Neo-liberals, neo-conservatives, and other such scum didn't fair too well.

A 2010 survey of the anarchist movement performed online with over 2,500 respondents found goth to be the fourth most common subcultural affiliation, after punk, hippy, and hardcore. (To be fair, punk was far, far in the lead).

> principal that most people on the street think that what they're following is noble, however, how the leaders themselves are executing that noble notion is a very different thing all together."

The long-lived industrial band **Flesh Field** is named in response to (and not to promote) violence against women. Their song "Doragon" condemns the rabidly homophobic Westboro Baptist Church, and "Compulsive Betrayal" gets at the rejection of capitalist conformity. "Uprising" and "Voice Of Dissent" are a few more of their many politically-themed songs.

Velvet Acid Christ is outspoken on internet forums in support of radical, anti-corporate politics, and expresses vegan and animal rights issues on a regular basis.

Suicide Commando performs "One Nation Under God (Anti-US Mix)" with a backdrop conflating US war atrocities and the Third Reich.

Industrial Hip-hop, around since the eighties, has always been political. From **The Beatnig**'s "Malcolm X" to **Meat Beat Manifesto**'s "Solid Waste." Try **The Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy**'s song "Television The Drug Of The Nation." **Stromkern** sings "we want a revolution" in their song "Stand Up." And on their official blog, we're reminded "Remember: resistance is not terrorism."

Martial Industrial is a genre sometimes known for right wing influences, but eco-anarchists **MILITIA** have a collectivist approach to music-making. They said in an interview with Russian magazine *Achtung*:

> "We founded MILITIA to be a tool for the spreading of our eco-environmental views and our social ideas, which are based upon the anarchic philosophies of the Russian anarchists Bakunin and Kropotkin and the French 'father' of anarchism Proudhon. We combined certain elements of their social views with our own ideas regarding environmental problems, so we designed an alternative social form in which people can live in harmony with their natural environment, based upon anarchic principles. This means that we distinguish ourselves from the conventional left wing ideas—which believe in a society lead by a government—and form a strong opposition against the appearance of right wing ideas that seem to infiltrate the industrial music scene more and more."

The mostly-lyricless powernoise genre gets into the act with bands like **Winterkälte**, who names songs things like "Ban Depleted Uranium Weapons" and "Nuclear Free North America."

The dark orchestral rock group **The Red Paintings** use their clout and songwriting to support the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, a group of eco-rebels who travel the globe to sabotage whaling missions and whaling ships. The Red Paintings have written songs like "We Belong In The Sea," and have staged benefits for The Sea Shepherd. They rewrote **Midnight Oil**'s "Beds Are Burning" (already a political song by a political band adored by many a goth) to be "Whales Are Dying."

Rammstein is often mis-interpreted as glorifying or trivializing Nazism, but they actively identify as leftist. Their song "Links 2, 3, 4" references old German communist songs and has the (translated) chorus "Left, left, left, left."

Even the major-label and radio gothic includes a remarkable political stance: **A Perfect Circle**, a band who shares the vocalist Maynard James Keenan with Tool, released *eMOTIVe*, an album of anti-war cover songs. This includes the famous socialist-anarchist anthem "Imagine" written by John Lennon: "Imagine there's no countries […] imagine no possessions."

Marilyn Manson has also covered John Lennon, recording a version of "Working-Class Hero." Manson has long been outspoken on political issues dear to the heart of us radical goths: the rights to self-expression and self-determination. He speaks eloquently on the issue of the Columbine High School massacre in Michael Moore's documentary *Bowling For Columbine*, and of course the band's lyrics are often intensely political.

Trent Reznor of **Nine Inch Nails** is on the forefront of mainstream musicians finding alternatives to major labels, releasing music under Creative Commons licensing. He also released *Year Zero*, a concept album set in a dystopian future intended to criticize the US government. Even on his first album, *Pretty Hate Machine*, we're treated to "Head Like A Hole," a blatant critique of money and power.

I don't intend to put a specific value judgement on political songs, claiming that they are somehow superior to the rest of the music we might make. I point out these artists, albums, and songs only to draw attention to a sometimes-ignored facet of our culture that has been there from the beginning and isn't going away anytime soon.

Yes, there is fascist and right wing spooky music as well, but this is very much a minority position within most subgenres of gothic culture.

I will say, however, that I find the vapidity of much of the mainstream gothic today to be disheartening. As I feel I have adequately exampled above, most of the founders of our culture were concerned with the state of the world and saw things through a radical lens. But much of what is promoted in clubs these days ranges from bland to openly misogynistic.

There *is* value in knowing the opinions of the artistic creators we respect. For myself, it informs—but does not dictate!—my listening, because it helps me identify with the individuals who are behind the music. And it absolutely affects who I am interested in supporting, whether through money or words: the gothic acts influenced by mainstream ideas like money and sexism have plenty of support already, since the mainstream is quite happy to support their own. Those bands who are interested in exploring the root of interpersonal, social, and environmental problems are, however, worth reaching out to. ✳

HOW TO START A DIY GOTH NIGHT

by Libby Bulloff



Like many goths, I got my first delicious taste of the scene online, chatting with other people of the dark persuasion on message boards and Livejournal. However, there is something distinctly missing from web interaction: you can't dance on the internet. Because I lived in a fairly culturally bereft area of the Midwest, I didn't attend my first goth/industrial event until I was 21, as all of the available live music was performed in bars. So I was exceedingly grateful for the dark corners of the internet. Still, I believe that every city, regardless of size or location, needs a safe place in meatspace wherein those of us with spooky tendencies can congregate and socialize, and most importantly, get our dance on.

When I was 22, I helped start and maintain a goth/industrial night in Bloomington, Indiana: a smallish college town of about 70,000 people. This was no light feat: 30 miles north of Bloomington is the center of KKK action in the United States, and our visible population of non-mainstream folks was minuscule, if not nonexistent. Our event was called Axis of Evil (as it took place in a sports-themed frat bar that used to be called Axis), and we ran it monthly, successfully, until my collaborator—transhumanist and maker space guru, Willow Brugh—and I each relocated to Seattle, Washington in 2008.

Axis was born out of a lack of safe, feminist- and GLBTQI-friendly, pro-goth places in Indiana, as well as coincidence. Willow and I scored the night at the club because we attended a regular event there and found the bar nearly empty (we expected barfights with frat pledges, not a dude-bro DJ willing to spin Underworld for a shot of Grey Goose). She spoke with the manager on a whim, asking if we could ever rent the venue to do a one-off event of a dark nature, and he gave us a monthly night as long as we managed to fill the bar and sell drinks.

Axis was not only financially successful (we always broke even, and used money netted from door fees to pay DJs, purchase food for events, and acquire decorations), it was a social triumph. Even though our city was small and a little close-minded, we saw our attendance steadily increase as folks poured in from Louisville, Indianapolis, Chicago, and surrounding small towns. Feedback from attendees was positive, and we managed to keep infighting between goths, punks, and rivetheads to a minimum. A DIY fashion show hosted at Axis on a weeknight garnered international attention as well as a solid 85 people in the audience (I rarely see 85 people at a goth night in Seattle, let alone a small town in the Bible Belt).

If I sound like a smug, proud parent, it's because I was. However, running a goth night isn't all cupcakes with bat-shaped sprinkles, no. We ran into our fair share of stressors, including being double-booked with a fraternity beer-pong night, last-minute cancelations from DJs and designers, broken sound equipment, and belligerently intoxicated guests. Still, I believe that what Willow and I managed to do with Axis of Evil, having no budget, no backing, and wavering

support from a dying scene could serve as a model for other goth nights and for community-building amongst our ranks.

Without further adieu, here are some tips for making your own goth night.

Set Goals And Start Small

Figure out why you want to start a night before you jump into it—this will help you assess your needs. Do you want it to be a traditional club night with music and dancing? If so, will the music be performed live or played by a DJ? Will the event be all-ages or 21+? Are you doing the night for fun or to turn a profit? Will you charge a cover or ask for donations? How many people will you expect, and how small a venue is acceptable? Is ambiance important? Willow and I had to ask ourselves all of these questions and more as we planned our events. We distilled our motives down to one idea, however: YOU WILL DANCE. This was our motto and appeared on most all of our flyers. Basically, if our guests weren't having fun, we weren't doing it right.

Find A Venue

Goth nights don't have to go down at hoity-toity nightclubs with 18-foot ceilings and a mummy over the bar. You can host an event anywhere that is safe: community centers, someone's backyard or basement, et cetera. Check the fire code and make sure you have trustworthy people to manage your door, your bar (if you have one), and run security. Themed events are useful to create ambience without spending a lot of money, and most goths like the encouragement to dress up.

Promote Your Event

Crucial if you want anyone to show up! The internet is the most efficient way to spread the word—we set up a website for Axis of Evil, but we also used Livejournal, Twitter, Facebook, and message boards on goth music sites to garner attention. Don't discount the power of paper flyers tacked up in coffee shops and bookstores, as well as word of mouth. Start promoting your event at least two weeks before it takes place and send out a reminder the day of in case guests forget. Buddy up with other goth-friendly events in your area and cross-promote. Everyone wins.

Play Music

What separates the great goth nights from the good goth nights is the quality and variety of music. If your goal is to fill the dance floor, you'll need to ascertain what kind of music will appeal to your audience. Don't feel like you have to strictly adhere to any one genre, however—there is such a smörgåsbord of dark, goth-friendly music to choose from, and I've found that big city audiences are often greedy for brand new, cutting edge music, but will reluctantly settle for the same EBM tracks played on repeat. Small town clubgoers are less judgmental of genre-mashing and more willing to get schooled on the dance floor. When I DJed, I could get away with slipping in the occasional Squirrel Nut Zippers, or glitchy IDM song, or a nine minute long Einstürzende Neubauten track as long as I padded out my set with more familiar, palatable pieces.

On that note, you will want to decide between DJs spinning recorded music, live performances by bands or dancers, or an amalgamation of the two. DJs can get by with a laptop or iPod and speakers; bands will need a soundboard, PA system, and an engineer. Willow and I weren't often able to pay Axis DJs more than $25 to perform, and we'd have to scrounge to hire bands, but we always sent musicians away with home-cooked meals and offered them a safe place to stay after the event. This proved to be more valuable to our performer friends than cash during their long stints on the road.

Create Community Inside And Outside Of The Club

The reason, I've found, that scenes don't last is not the media or economic stressors. The destruction comes from within—boredom, infighting, unwillingness to adapt. Looking to structure your event as a seed for community rather than just a scene is the key to survival. Encourage folks to spend time together outside of the club and offline. Willow and I scheduled gothic OMGWTFBBQs at local parks so our patrons with children could attend events, and so we could eat together and play and converse away from the strobe lights and industrial beats. We invited the people who visited our dance floor to eat breakfast with us at a local café the next morning. We hosted movie screenings, craft nights, and games outside of the club, as well as participated in online discussions amongst our guests. Willow and I were also serious about our club night being a feminist, political, and queer-friendly space, and occasionally intervened when we felt like these boundaries were being violated. This extra effort kept our tiny community together.

Hopefully my experiences with managing and promoting a goth night in a small town will serve as inspiration to you, regardless of where you live. It was definitely a labor of love, but the return on the investment will be something I carry with pride for the rest of my days.



ATTRITION

"If you see the Buddha on the road, kill the Buddha"

interview and photography by Holger Karas

Martin Bowes, and Attrition, has been in the music business for more than 30 years now, something not many musicians can claim. He got his start in 1979 as a painter and fanzine publisher, putting out 18 issues of Alternative Sounds, *which culminated in 1981 as a vinyl compilation,* Sent from Coventry *(on Cherry Red Records), and a brief appearance on the BBC's* Something Else *program.*

But Martin felt a strong urge to exchange his brush for a synthesizer and to paint in dark sounds rather than colors. Founded in 1980 by Martin Bowes and Julia Waller in Coventry, England, Attrition took part in the emerging DIY cassette culture, contributing multiple tracks to early underground cassette compilations and fanzines alongside such projects as Portion Control, Konstruktivits, Chris and Cosey, The Legendary Pink Dots, Nurse With Wound, and Coil. The band's first album, Death House, *was a cassette of two experimental electronic soundtracks inspired by zombie films.*

Attrition were pioneers in dark electronic music. They got their start at a time when it was still unusual for a band to not have guitars. And still, they are a driving force in the genre, having sold more than 50,000 albums, toured throughout much of the world, appeared at major festivals, and had their music included on a number of film soundtracks.

Their music is a marriage of dark and light, of futures and pasts, probing unexplored sonic landscapes with an eclectic melange of experimental and traditional sound, of electronics and acoustics, of male and female.

I first met Martin at Wave-Gotik-Treffen, where all people meet, in 2010. After his fabulous show with Attrition, Martin came to the Schillerndes Dunkel *(a German book on the gothic scene, ed.) booth at the Schauspielhaus and we got to talking. We got along well right away. In November, I finally managed to board a plane to Coventry to shoot the "Mercy Machine" a photo project with Attrition.*

Martin Bowes is the machine behind Attrition, and his batteries seem to be fully charged. With 18 full releases, 10 collections, 15 singles, and tracks on any number of samplers, Attrition has been very productive in the last 30 years, and that energy is still unbroken. I was honored to have the opportunity to listen to the materials for Attrition's upcoming release and I can say that after three decades, they are still creative and developing. They've never gone the path of easy-listening mainstream goth, and I'm sure some will be surprised what Martin has been brewing in his beautifully-decorated home in Coventry.

Holger: *Martin, you've been in the business of making music now for over 30 years. Can you comment on how things have actually changed? There is a lot of fuzz about commercialization and such—were you ever tempted to move down the commercial path?*

Martin: In many ways "commercialism" is a meaningless term. When we enter into the music "business" on any level—or any business for that matter—we are entering the arena of commerce. How we present our art and the way we make it available, even the things we buy ourselves to make it all possible. From a self release to an indie label to a major, it is all basically the same—the concept at any rate. What differs is the content. We either make a product to satisfy a perceived demand or shout and scream and cry and laugh and bleed and put that on a CD no matter what the outcome in sales or commercial return.

We all have to decide which way works for us. I need the second way. And that is not to say I haven't ever compromised, everyone does to whatever extent. And that's fine. As long as the soul is still shining...

Holger: *Most of your fans, at least those who have listened to the 2009 live album [*Kill The Buddha!*], know that you are vegan, which is certainly a good thing. Can you tell us about the motivation behind that?*

Martin: I actually became a vegetarian first, about 30 years ago, at the same time I started Attrition. I was heavily into and influenced by the anarcho-punk bands at the time like Crass—we even contributed to one of their *Bullshit Detector* compilations—, and Flux of Pink Indians made a single on their label called "Sick Butchers,"an obviously vegetarian song, and I immediately knew they were right in that view. I became vegetarian that week. I think it took me three days to change.

Nearly 20 years after that, I came to the realization that vegan was the right thing to do. The cruelty to dairy animals is immense, and I needed to go further. I have now been vegan for 11 years, and I have never felt better, although my children think I am mental.

Holger: *What are your ideas about society, the current stage of our civilization and the future?*

Martin: I have varying views, depending on how I feel and what is happening day-to-day. Currently, our western civilisation is under a lot of stress, is being exposed for the corrupt system it always was. In England we are returning to the dark days of the Thatcher era. Riots on the streets mean something, are trying to tell the governments something. And they are happening a lot now...

I like to think humankind will evolve. I think a personal spiritual evolution is important in that step. We will not find it through political systems and neither in the dogma of religions, even if they promise us much. Philosophy helps. We all need to stop following leaders and make our own way. Do not worry about fitting into the world—let the world fit around us.

In England we are returning to the dark days of the Thatcher era. Riots on the streets mean something, are trying to tell the governments something. And they are happening a lot now.

Holger: *Your music, and especially your lyrics are somewhat removed from mainstream goth. "The Mercy Machine" for example, can be interpreted in many ways, religious as well as societal. Where do you get the inspiration for your texts?*

Martin: I don't really enjoy mainstream goth, for whatever it is? I have always produced music that can be seen as dark. And I know I wrote "A Girl Called Harmony," my divorce song, and that is seen so much as a "goth" song. And we get asked to play many goth events, which we love, but its not music I listen to myself.

"The Mercy Machine" I still like. And yes, it has many meanings—religious, societal, and about personal relationships. These are themes I address in most of my work. Love and death and sex and religious and spiritual and political ideas and ideals. And I try to use my subconscious, so you will find many of these ideas overlap and I am talking about all these things at once. As in our dreams, everything, and nothing, is real.

Holger: *If I understood you correctly, you are the sole writer and composer for Attrition, although you work with many other musicians for the actual production and recording. This is an interesting concept, as it gives away control of part of the creative process, but on the other hand it brings in many other views. Do you work this way out of principle, or did it just happen?*

Martin: When Attrition began it was very much a collaborative process between the three of us then. I really believed in the communal concept, and especially the male and female influence in creative work. It worked for a while but then I started finding I was doing more and more myself, to the day when I wrote almost everything. Which is fine—it was a big challenge and a progression for me. And now the band is me—and whoever I want to work with—, which is a creative freedom I enjoy. And yes, I come out with sketches and others contribute to that, which in turn affects what I am writing. So there is a to-and-fro of ideas. I love that—we none of us exist in a vacuum.

Holger: *In our conversation you mentioned that you actually started out as artist and fanzine publisher before you began to paint with sound. Have you ever considered restarting some of these activities, maybe as a counterpart to the label-dictated, commercial publishing in the vast domain of the so called gothic scene?*

Martin: Yes, I started out as a painter—and sometimes sculptor— which is why I see music in pictures rather than notes. I briefly returned to visual art in 1990, but at that time I made the decision that I only have the energy for one art form and I chose music as it meant so much more to me at the time—and still does. Although sometimes I am tempted to paint, or write.We shall see... and yes I have even thought of doing a fanzine but I doubt I will seriously take that up as that was also a full time occupation! It was fun and I learned a lot and met a lot of people in bands and labels at the time (1979-80), so it gave me a head start when I started the band. But for now I am happy with the way things are, with music.

Holger: *John Santerineross made several covers for Attrition, how did you two came together ? I would say John's art is a kind of "visual Attrition," as you also use many symbols in your lyrics.*

Martin: Yes, I love John's work and I agree that it is visually sometimes similar to what I do in sound. The collage of images is a similar style to my collage of words and sampled sounds... I just came across John's work randomly on the web in 1999 and contacted him to see if he would like to collaborate with me on the album covers. He did four covers for me in the end, until I decided it was time to move on. I met John in NYC when we played at CBGB's that same year... a really nice guy too.

Holger: *If you had the power, what would be a primary thing you want to change?*

Martin: If I only had one choice then it would be to stop the mindless slaughter of others, human or animal, for whatever reason anyone could give me.

Holger: *Is there anything you want to say to our readers which is not covered by the stupid questions I wrote up?*

Martin: The questions were not stupid, I enjoyed them Holger!

At the moment I am busy working on a short horror film score and going through old tapes for a vinyl-only double album release of rare material out late next year on Vinyl on Demand.And I am writing the new Attrition album for 2011, *The Unraveller of Angels*. I would invite people to check out our music via the websites and maybe come and see us live if they get the chance. We have a lot of years left!✳

Attrition can be found online at ATTRITION.CO.UK, MYSPACE.COM/ATTRITIONUK, FACEBOOK.COM/ATTRITION, and YOUTUBE.COM/USER/ATTRITION.





Unwoman performing at Gilman in Berkeley, December 5th, 2010. Photo by Libby Bulloff.

Unwoman is a singer/songwriter/composer/cellist who plays with genre more successfully than most anything I've heard. I think author Warren Ellis might have said it best, describing her music as "Stark, politicised electro shot through with crunching noise and acoustic colours." She's toured with Rasputina and Voltaire, and her albums range from ambient industrial to gothic covers of pop songs.

Unwoman was actually the first musician I was in touch with for Graceless, and I had a chance to photograph her in her San Francisco home. Before I left, she gave me an antique key tied with ribbon to a tiny USB stick that held her discography.

Over the following months, we spoke about genre and gender, about the problems of political songwriting, and what it means to quit your dayjob to pursue music.

UNWOMAN

Graceless: *A good number of years ago, you used to run a goth night at the Long Haul, an anarchist infoshop in Berkeley. What was that like? Was it the clashing of worlds, or did it mesh well?*

Unwoman: It was really, really fun. I didn't feel it clashed, but it only lasted a summer before I went back to college. I didn't know what I was doing, but once a month my friend Sharon (who was in charge of decorating and the contact with the Long Haul organizers) and I loaded our underwhelming sound gear into the Long Haul and spun what we wanted to, a few people came and danced, and we raised a few dollars for Food Not Bombs. Older punks showed up, tickled I was playing Crass along with The Cure, Dead Can Dance, and Siouxsie. (If I learned anything that year, it was that everyone likes Crass.)

Graceless: *What about your name, Unwoman. What's that about?*

Unwoman: Unwomen were, in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, sterile, subversive, or lesbian women, unable or unwilling to play by the dystopian patriarchy's rules. It struck a chord with me that still resonates, as a female musician not content to follow the usual rules.

Graceless: *Your song "Always Radical" seems like it's at once an unrequited love song and a political song. Do you have any interest in sharing that story?*

Unwoman: A lot of my songs are about love, requited or un-. "Always Radical" is about a boy I knew in college. J and I had a global politics class together, and when the lecturer showed a documentary about Rwanda he and I were the only people who allowed ourselves to be moved to tears, in a class of hundreds. The teacher spoke of the event in the most dehumanizing terms and I felt this angry connection with J. He looked like a very young Bob Dylan and he was vegan (as was I at the time). We started hanging out and he had this passionate dedication to causes, and a total disinterest in me romantically. Both of those things fascinated me. Once I took him to the graveyard behind my house and I asked if I could kiss him, and he said "okay" and I did, very briefly, and it was the blandest kiss I've ever experienced. That made me see him as some kind of secular monk, and I still wanted him but I gave up trying to be more than friends. The next year he dropped out of school and disappeared to some foreign land. His name is too common to google.

> I've always believed goths—the ones who are in it for more than an excuse to wear shiny pants from Hot Topic—are smarter than average, willing to question authority and gender roles, and willing to go deep into philosophical issues.

One thing the experience taught me was how, although politics will always be important to me, sex is a need I can't deny myself. And that if I was totally willing to follow someone else (with my eyes wide open, of course, always analyzing) into his beliefs and revolutionary plans without asking him to change for me at all, that was something I really needed to look at.

That was around the same time I had the little club at the Long Haul. I think on the subject of radical plus gothic, I've



Unwoman at home. Photo by Margaret Killjoy.

always believed goths—the ones who are in it for more than an excuse to wear shiny pants from Hot Topic—are smarter than average, willing to question authority and gender roles, and willing to go deep into philosophical issues. I love that. I think goth music reflects that. The biggest problem I've had talking with some goths about politics has been a pessimism, disbelief that anything they do could make a difference, and hopelessly bitter cynicism about politics. I think they think it makes them look cool but I find it unbelievably frustrating. Radical sincerity and hope is what we need next. We need to stop idolizing the coolly ironic.

Graceless: *At one point during the photo shoot we did, you mentioned to me that a lot of your new stuff isn't as explicitly political?*

Unwoman: I've definitely moved away from the overt politics. I didn't know what I wanted to sing about when I started writing songs, or rather there were so many things I felt strongly about and felt I had to sing about. I came out guns blazing with political songs like "Freedom From Religion!"—yes, the song title has an exclamation point—but I think my best political songs are subtler and don't resort to four-letter words. With *Blossoms* and later works, however, I've focused more on the personal-political. Interpersonal relationships, infidelities, domestic violence, struggles for independence and identity. I might return to political topics when I have a better sense of where I fit into the world, what I'm angry about and what I'm grateful for.

Graceless: *Earlier this year when we first started talking, you said were standing on a precipice, about to leave your dayjob to pursue your music career full-time. How has that gone for you?*

Unwoman: It was a terrifying leap, but it definitely needed to happen. It's been seven months now since I left, and I'd planned to be out of money by now, but I've gotten really good at spending very little, and luckily all my equipment is still working (knock on wood) and I also got a bump from

Amanda Palmer in March that basically doubled my fanbase and made sales of *Casualties* actually pay my rent for a couple months.

There were good things about having a dayjob—working with other talented people, and working on projects bigger than myself—but it's amazing how much time is wasted when you're supposedly working eight hours a day on things you aren't necessarily passionate about. Now that I've seen the other side of it I am ninety-nine percent sure I'll never have a full-time corporate job again. For one thing, when I perform in other cities, it may be difficult getting people to come out to see me, but the response from audiences is overwhelmingly encouraging. I had some truly magical shows on the West Coast last May. It tells me I need to keep pushing, hard, to make this work.

Graceless: *You play for gothic and steampunk audiences, but you certainly play with genre, breaking it in similar ways as you're interested in breaking concepts of gender?*

Unwoman: When I was starting playing music I had a few influences, all from vastly different genres. Classical, pop, experimental industrial, folk... I wanted to make music I would find intriguing and I wanted to use everything I knew to make the pieces the best they could be. Working on my first two albums I would actually send tracks out to friends of mine asking them what genre they thought it was. They would all answer differently. I had no idea how to categorize or market myself and of course it meant no labels would go *near* me, but it seemed much more honest than saying, "hey, I like this Britney Spears song, let's do something just like that and call it pop." I was in the goth/industrial scene but I didn't have guitars and didn't use (much) distortion on my voice and the cello was becoming more an more central to my works.

When steampunk became a thing, it took me a while but then I realized it was the perfect avenue for my anachrofuturistic sounds, and my visual aesthetic fit in quite well too, and there was no prescribed sound or instrumentation for what made up steampunk music. Several of the other bands (Abney Park, Vernian Process) were also very goth-influenced, so it fit. It's a label that can never really describe the sound of the music, and that will probably always rub me the wrong way, but it's one characteristic, and if I think of genre as a list of tags rather than only one category I'm a lot happier.

Genre and gender are connected, I suppose, in that I firmly believe we have the right to choose what traits and labels we take on without being judged in the slightest. The fact that society in general looks down on or fetishizes people who have gender reassignment or otherwise reject Western gender roles will never cease to amaze me. Like, seriously, how does this threaten you? The fact that the new mainstream news story is that it's okay to be gay as long as you get married and settle down is frustrating, as is the need to state that being gay isn't a choice. What if it were, don't we have the right to choose, isn't any healthy lifestyle as valid as the others? What if I want to be a boy one day and a girl the next, or to complement a bustier with a lovely mustache, without going any deeper into my motivation than "because I feel like it?"

One thing that's changed since I started calling myself Unwoman ten years ago is that I'm thinking now, if gender and genre aren't limited to one choice, you don't need to rebel against making choices. If you're allowed to pile on the genre tags for a song, calling it "cello rock, electro-blues, chamber pop, steampunk, goth" (which bandcamp.com allows) and if you allow yourself to pile attributes of the traditionally feminine and masculine onto your identity, there's no need to reject either the idea of genre or the idea of masculine/feminine. In fact playing with extreme traits from different genres and genders can be quite fun.✳

If gender and genre aren't limited to one choice, you don't need to rebel against making choices. If you're allowed to pile on the genre tags for a song, and if you allow yourself to pile attributes of the traditionally feminine and masculine onto your identity, there's no need to reject either the idea of genre or the idea of masculine/feminine.

Unwoman can be found online at www.unwoman.com.



The swing-music-loving Zazous of Nazi-occupied France stitched their own version of the Jewish star to their clothing in solidarity with those marked for death.

DRESSED TO KILL:

illegal dandyism

A subculture's fashion, these days, seems to signify nothing. But this hasn't always been the case, nor it need continue to be. Contemporary capitalism has turned fashion vapid and expelled it from the realm of significant cultural or political change. But fashion, when mixed with music and youth subculture, has many times erupted as a serious challenge to the banality—or repression—of the mainstream. As goths, many of us can remember a time before Hot Topic, when our fashion showed our disdain for the rest of society and its conformist values. Historically there have been many groups that were not only targeted for their clothes but that truly threatened society. And we are not talking about punks fighting skinheads or mods versus teddy-boys. We are not referring to subcultures engaging in almost ritualistic warfare, but to the idea of subculture as a counterculture based on music and fashion.

Fashion as protest or even open rebellion probably began shortly after "fashion" came about. The concept of fashion comes from the courts of England and France in the 18th century. The French revolution saw the beginning of dandyism, the inverting of fashion to express radical political defiance to the established order. A sect of revolutionaries in Paris took on the dress of the court in defiance of Royal decrees prohibiting "low-birth" citizens from wearing it. These fops wore the clothes to reject both the status quo and the growing mass hysteria of the revolutionary mobs. In England, slightly later, fashion was used to challenge the hereditary system there. Dandies made striking and flamboyant use of colored silks to gain entry into salons and the halls of power that would have been normally barred to them. Now, neither the fashionistas of revolutionary France nor the fops of London were a true counterculture, but they did suggest that fashion could be a force.

Young Nihilist men kept their hair long and "unmanaged" while the women streaked their hair with lye and braided cotton fuses into it. Both male and female Nihilists took to adorning their clothes with dried flowers pilfered from the graveyards where they often met.

The Young Nihilists

Our brief survey of fashionable counterculture begins with the *Молодые Нигилисты* (young nihilists) of Western Russia. The movement had its beginnings in the 1860s when Tsar Alexander II's regime introduced some limited reforms while at the same time forced an unbearable conformity based on Orthodox Christianity and absolute dynastic power. The Young Nihilists were often ex-students of the various schools and universities, some of which were shut down or converted to seminaries by the Tsar.

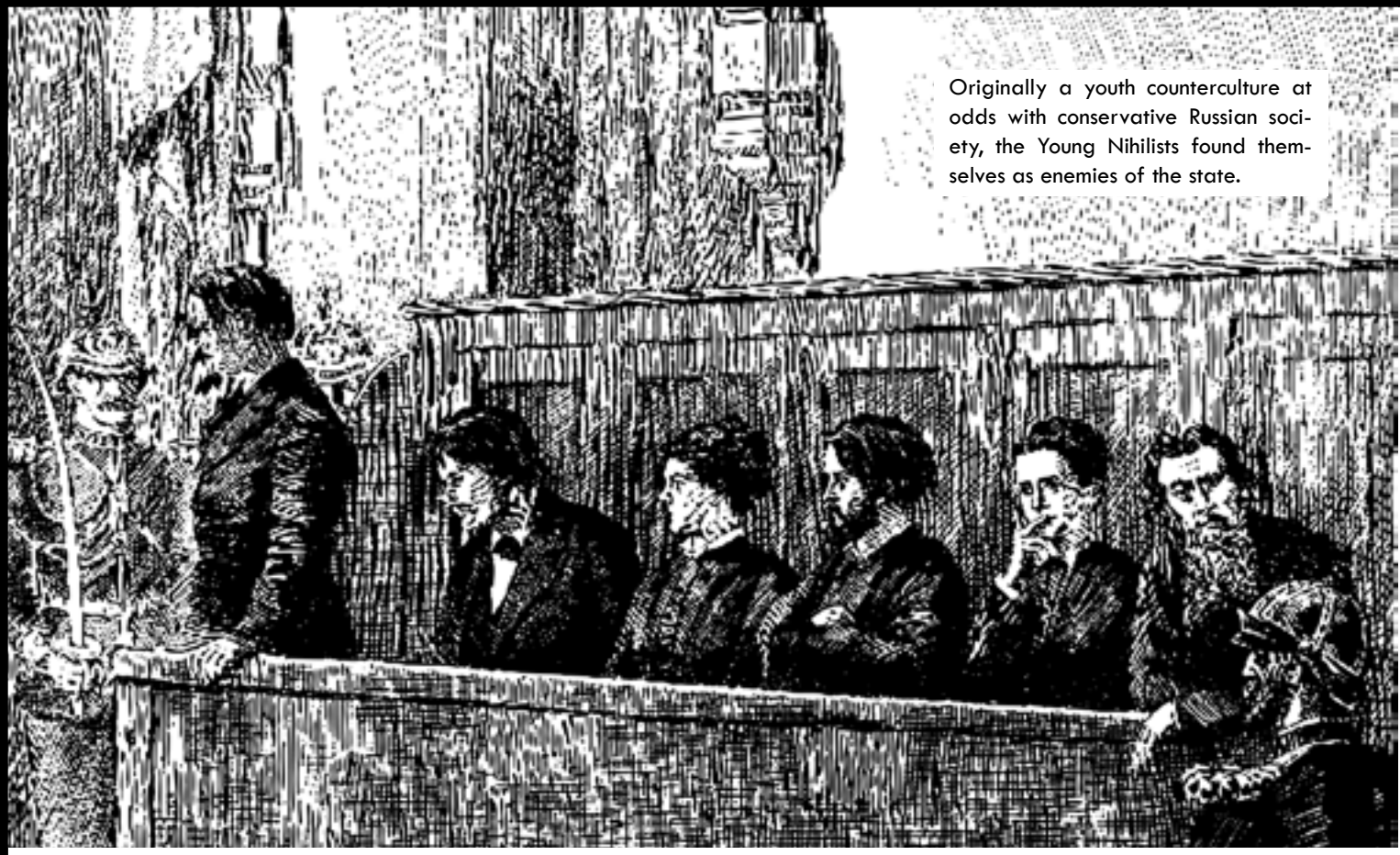
The Young Nihilists in Moscow and St. Petersburg looked to Britain and France for inspiration, seeing Russia as hopelessly backward with its restrictive religious dogma and powerful governmental censuring of music, art, literature, and the press. They were heavily influenced by the novel *Fathers and Sons* by Ivan Turgenev, which is the book that introduced the concept of a "generation gap" between the youth and the older Russians who fought a rear-guard action against the Westernization and modernization of Russia. The Young Nihilists challenged the legitimacy of all society, rejecting religion, the aristocracy, and the corruption and hypocrisy of the government. They believed the only course of action open to those wishing to a live a "true" life was the complete rejection of all of society's conventions.

The first volley in this generational battle was the adoption of new kinds of music, language, and dress that shocked the Nihilist's parents and eventually threatened the social order of Tsarist Russia. Their philosophy became a lifetstyle that put them at odds with their parents, the church, and eventually the powers of the State.

According to accounts written at the time, the Young Nihilists were mostly identifiable by their peculiar dress. They fancied wearing blue sunglasses—even at night—, and wearing long, black, silk jackets "cut in a style of the priestly robe" but adorned with intricate designs they often embroidered themselves. Young Nihilist men kept their hair long and "un-managed" while the women streaked their hair with lye and braided cotton fuses into it. Both male and female Nihilists took to adorning their clothes with dried flowers pilfered from the graveyards where they often met. The men carried straight razors sheathed on their belts, in case they decided to take their own lives at any moment, and the female Nihilists strolled the streets of St. Petersburg with lockets filled with poison, deadly-sharp hat pins, and gentlemen's walking sticks. Both male and female Nihilists smoked with elongated and oriental ivory cigarette holders.

Since most Nihilists came from educated families, they often had musical training in various instruments. They would meet in "bone amphitheaters," the holding crypts found in Russian Orthodox cemeteries, and played decadent music from France and England. They read aloud from western poems smuggled into the country. They spoke together in an argot of Russian peppered liberally with nonsense slang as well as English and French words.

At first, only seminary students disrupted these gatherings of Young Nihilists. There were pitched battles in the cemeteries,



Originally a youth counterculture at odds with conservative Russian society, the Young Nihilists found themselves as enemies of the state.

parks, and even on the streets between seminary students and Young Nihilists. If the seminarists won, they would cut the hair of the Nihilist men and shredded the women's masculine clothes.The Young Nihilists started to travel to their clandestine gatherings in groups to protect themselves. When a number of dynamite explosions damaged churches and police stations in St. Petersburg, Young Nihilists became public enemy number one. The Dynasty outlawed blue sunglasses and there was even a law to limit the length of a young man's hair.

As more and more Nihilists ended up serving hard time or found themselves conscripted into the Kreposts (a form of military school) for such petty offences as posting flyers and smuggling in Western books, the Nihilists went underground, mingling with other more seasoned revolutionaries. The remaining Young Nihilists were rounded up after the assassination (by anarchists and nihilists) of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, thus ending the Young Nihilist movement in Russia.

The Zoot Suiters

Closer to home are the American Zoot Suiters of the 1940s who were as much aggrieved by the generation gap as the Young Nihilists had been. The young and urban Zoot Suiters, like the Young Nihilists, were instantly identifiable by their adopted music, language, and dress. For the men, the style was to wear a zoot suit—a flamboyant long coat with baggy, pegged pants (reminiscent in many ways of the English Dandies); a pork pie hat; a long key chain; and multi-toned shoes with pointed toes. The women wore a combination of Spanish traditional clothing and the styles of the "free jazz" movement influenced by southern blacks. These clothes were not popular or off-the-shelf, so they were all homemade, precursors to the Do-It-Yourself movement. Their music was jazz and it was "fast, sensual, and lead to easy corruption of the moral sense" according to Reverend Felix Hillcocks, the Rush Limbaugh of his day. The Zoot Suiters rejected the regular and staid work schedule, instead sleeping all day and going out dancing and carousing until morning—especially on weekdays (Tuesdays being particularly popular). The men resisted conscription and wore their hair long in defiance of the more patriotic military hairstyles of the time. Their music, language, racial mixing, and clothes all rejected the conformity of wartime America.

The so-called Zoot Suit Riots were a series of riots in 1943 during World War II that erupted in Los Angeles, California. On one side were the white sailors and Marines stationed throughout the city, and on the other were Latino youths, who were recognizable by the zoot suits they favored. While Mexican Americans were the primary targets of these violent military servicemen, African-American and Filipino/Filipino-American youth were also targeted. The Zoot Suit Riots were in part the effect of war and racism. They quickly spread across the country, reaching to the east coast.

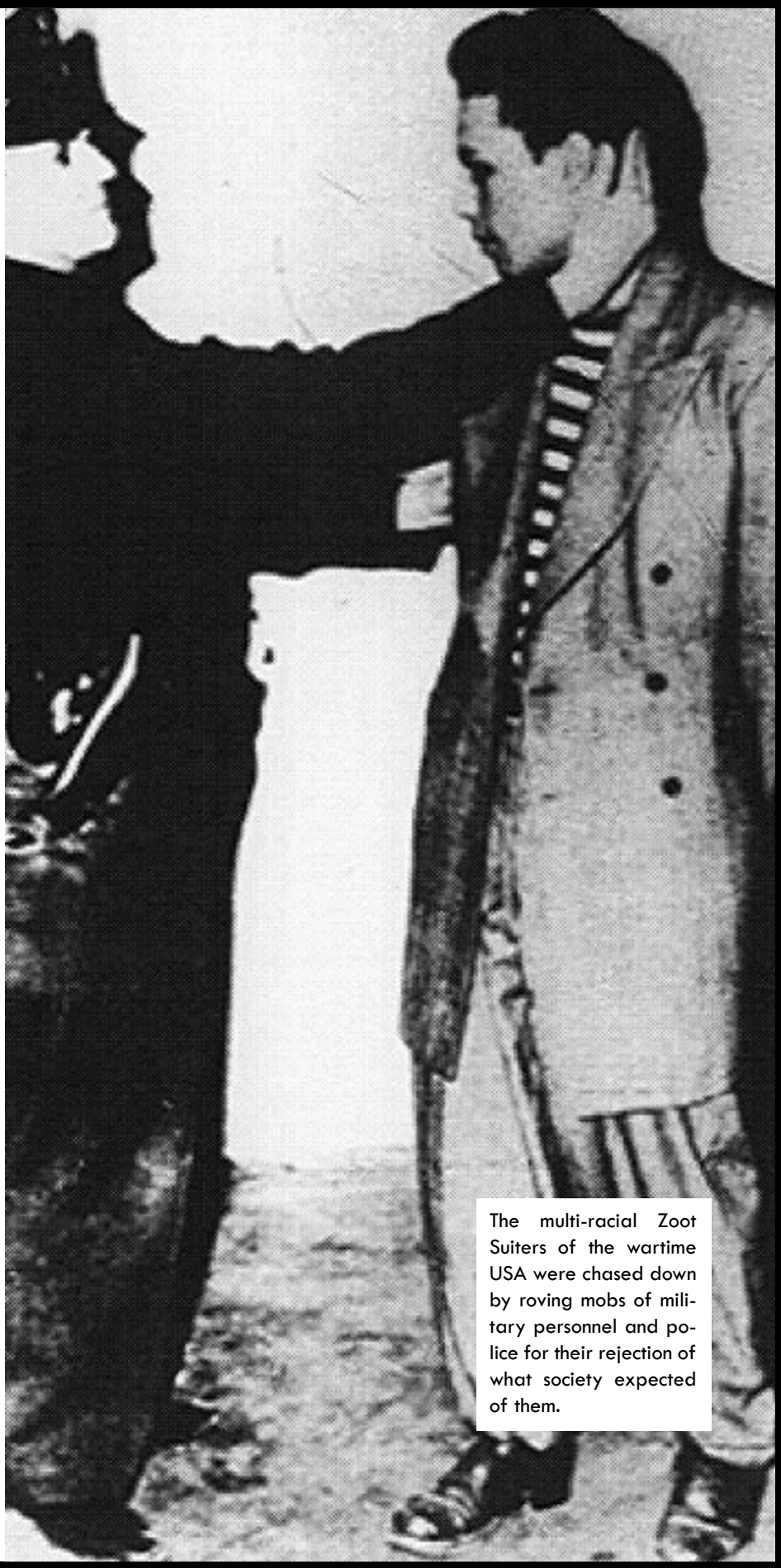
With the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941, the nation had to come to terms with the restrictions

of rationing and the prospects of conscription. The War Production Board's first rationing act had a direct effect on the manufacture of suits. In an attempt to institute a 26% cut-back in the use of fabrics, the War Production Board drew up regulations for the wartime manufacture of what *Esquire* magazine called, "streamlined suits by Uncle Sam." The regulations effectively forbade the manufacture of zoot suits. This was seen by many as a direct attack on the growing multi-racial youth groups who were becoming suspect because of their protests against conscription. Service men took it upon themselves to enforce the ban and traveled in "convoys" up to a thousand strong to attack Zoot Suiters in bars, movie theaters, and on the street—all with the passive aid of local police departments. The Zoot Suiters didn't take it lying down and fought back against prejudice, military goons, and the police. Five hundred "Zoot-Suited Hooligans" were arrested in a single week by the LAPD, while not a single service man was arrested or ticketed. The zoot suit phenomena was a moral and social scandal in the eyes of the authorities, not simply because it was associated with petty crime and violence, but because it openly snubbed the laws of rationing. In the fragile harmony of wartime society, the Zoot Suiters were, according to Octavio Paz, "a symbol of love and joy or of horror and loathing, an embodiment of liberty, of disorder, of the forbidden."

But the Zoot Suiters in the US were just one of many counterculture groups during the 1940s that incorporated fashion, music, and resistance. Europe was seeing its share of ungovernable youth, of organized, jazzed-up fashionistas not willing to be herded into polite society and war.

The Zazous

When the Nazis sought to remake French culture with the collaboration of the Vichy Regime, one of the first groups to resist were the mysteriously-named Zazous (the name is thought to have come from a scat from a Cab Calloway song). The men wore extra large



The multi-racial Zoot Suiters of the wartime USA were chased down by roving mobs of military personnel and police for their rejection of what society expected of them.

jackets, which hung down to their knees and which were fitted out with many pockets and often several half-belts. The amount of material used was in direct response to government decrees on the rationing of clothing material. The jackets were definitely related to the Zoots. Their trousers and ties were narrow, with their trousers gathered at the waist, their ties of cotton or heavy wool. Their shirt collars were high and kept in place by a horizontal pin. They liked thick-soled suede shoes, with white or brightly-colored socks. Their hair was greased and long.

The Schlurfs did not have a uniform look per se, but prided themselves on creating their own outrageous DIY fashions. The men were even said to wear their hair long and "girlish" and don dark lipstick, "looking like vampires on the streets of Vienna" according a scandalized and disgusted Nazi corpsman in a letter home.

Women wore their hair in braids, or in curls that fell down to their shoulders. Blonde was the favorite color. They wore bright red lipstick and sunglasses—the latter of which were also favored by some male Zazous. They wore jackets with extremely wide shoulders and they wore short, pleated skirts in bright colors. Their stockings were striped or sometimes net, and they wore shoes with thick wooden soles.

The Zazous (male and female) also carried rolled umbrellas to represent Britain's defiance of the blitz and to wield as weapons with which to fight fascists in the street. They frequented vegetarian restaurants and developed a passion for grated carrot salad. They usually drank fruit juice, or beer with grenadine syrup—called a Zazous—a cocktail that they seem to have invented. There were Zazous from all classes, races, and genders, but with apparently similar outlooks. Working-class Zazous stole cloth and made use of the black market to get their outfits, sometimes stitching their own clothes.

It was their ironic and sarcastic comments on the Nazi/Vichy rulers, their dandyism and hedonism, their suspicion of the work ethic, and their love of "decadent" jazz that distinguished them as one of the prototype youth movements to question capitalist society. One fascist magazine commented on the male Zazou, "Here is the specimen of Ultra Swing 1941: hair hanging down to the neck, teased up into an untidy quiff, little moustache à la Clark Gable ... shoes with too-thick soles, syncopated walk." At that time, Jazz was mostly associated with black culture and thus went directly against the Aryanization of culture that was happening in Vichy and the rest of Nazi-occupied Europe. The authorities attempted to shut down their clubs, making use of fire codes and other pretexts to harass sympathetic bar and café owners. The Zazous were forced to to keep on the move, finding new places to meet and dance, including in cemeteries late at night. When Vichy ordered Jews to wear the yellow star of David, the Zazous added it to their wardrobe as both a fashion and political statement, putting "Zazous" in the center of the star.

Despite their relentless and early courage against the fascists, they were rejected by the patriotic free French partisan movement that believed that their homosexuality, lack of nationalism, and flippant style was not worthy of supporting even after they started to be rounded up and sent to concentration camps in Poland and Germany. Despite these persecutions and lack of support, the Zazous continued to be one of the most open and visible signs of resistance on the streets of France up until the liberation.

The Schlurfs

Schlurfs were, no, not cousins of little blue dwarves, but young people in Austria who rejected what the Nazis had to "offer"—the whole package of militarism, strong work ethics, authoritarianism, and race hatred. The Schlurfs of Austria were similar to the French Zazous: they both lived in collaborantionist countries during World War II and took their subculture seriously enough to risk persecution by fighting fascists in the street. They were a wartime combination of Generation X slackers, Zoot Suiters, and Zazous. They rejected both work and school with a disdain for ambition and they flaunted their flamboyant clothes in response to the drab conservation of wartime restrictions. They adopted sexually ambiguous mannerisms and listened to black American-inspired swing jazz in late-night clubs that were underground both literally and figuratively.

Unlike the Zoot Suiters or the Zazous, they did not have a uniform look per se, but prided themselves on creating their own outrageous DIY fashions based on noir, science fiction, and German expressionism. The men were even said to wear their hair long and "girlish" and don dark lipstick, "looking like vampires on the streets of Vienna" according a scandalized and disgusted Nazi corpsman in a letter home. Despite the Schlurfs' resistance to Nazi ideology, once even burning a Hitler Youth Training Center to the ground, their repression continued even after Austria's liberation. The Schlurfs were not fighting for Austria or some return to bourgeois Viennese conformity, but to live their lives as they saw fit.

The Edelweiss Pirates

It is one thing to be fighting patriots in Los Angeles or even fascists in occupied countries, but quite another to be a vibrant youth subculture and resistance movement in the heart of Nazi Germany. When the Nazis came to power, they nearly succeeded in remaking German culture. But it would take more than Gestapo secret agents and the dreaded SS to convince the Edelweiss Pirates to give up their music, clothes, and lifestyle. Who were these mysterious Edelweiss Pirates that were deemed a "serious

internal menace" by the Gestapo in 1941? They were mostly teenagers with a penchant for dark hiking clothes marked with an edelweiss (a flower that grows in inaccessible mountain areas), long hair, and nighttime co-ed excursions into mountain forests, ruins, and graveyards. They, like the Schlurfs, also rejected education, work, and the other trappings of the Nazi government and its culture. Unlike the other groups, the Edelweiss Pirates didn't limit themselves to spontaneous street fights with fascists—they created their own newspapers and engaged in sabotage and assassinations against leading Gestapo and police officials. They even successfully raided an army convoy for weapons that were passed out at a club, to create armed self-defense forces of Pirates.

The Edelweiss Pirates wrote passionately about the need for spaces where people could come to together to "listen to the music that moves us, delight in our creativity, fall in love, and dare to be different." The Edelweiss Pirates existed during the Weimar period before the Nazis came to power. During this time, they developed from a music subculture (swing jazz) to a subculture that included fashion, literature, and even a basic politic of non-conformity.

At the time they were just one of the many subcultures and were not particularly impressive in size or notoriety. But when the Nazis came to power most other larger social scenes, with more venues and resources, collapsed under the Nazis' puritanical restrictions and enforcement. We may never know why out of all the groups the Edelweiss Pirates and their comrades (such as the Cologne Navahos) were able to not only exist but grow in size and influence despite their youth. One reason might be that many of the Edelweiss Pirates couldn't easily assimilate back into society. Perhaps their dreams were simply ungovernable.

At first glance it may seem like there is little connection between the rebellious Nihilists and swing kids and today's goth scene, but a deeper look can discern the obvious similarities. The goths, like the Nihilists, have always upset the conservative sensibilities of mainstream society with their clothes, music, and lifestyles. It isn't uncommon in small towns and affluent suburbs for alarmist articles in local papers to pop up from time to time, describing the goth menace. After the Columbine school shooting the papers and airwaves were full of know-nothings hysterically talking about the degenerative influences of "teen death culture," moronically lumping goths in with violent video games like Grand Theft Auto.

Goths, like their distant cousins the Zazous, reject the established pathways of "success" in this culture and wish to blaze their own trail. We can only hope that if our scenes become the victim of serious assault by fascists of any stripe we will have the nerve and solidarity of the Schlurfs and Edelweiss Pirates to not only withstand it but to fight back. Our fashion, our music, and our dandyism are not just another consumer niche to be co-opted by greedy capitalists, but the approximations of our deepest passions and dreams—ones worth defending.✳



As the Nazis came to power, the Edelweiss Pirates of Germany developed from a simple youth subculture to an armed resistance movement that struck at the heart of the Third Reich.

HOLGER KARAS

I was born in 1960 in a mid-sized town and grew up in a village close to nature. In those times you got your eggs and milk directly from the farm, and vegetables were growing in the gardens. This was the basis of the whole green movement in Germany, so it was a natural step for me, later, to be "alternative." But I was already twisted at that time, so it was natural for me to seek more than just hugging a tree every day. I started to read about communism, nihilism, and anarchy which I found fascinating, not realizing that it is a sort of utopia, which is worth moving towards even if we will probably never reach it.

When I turned 18 I was obliged to join the army, but I balked at the idea of serving an organization whose sole purpose is killing and I entered the civil services instead. It was there that I first got in touch with natural death, working in an retirement home.

I also met friends who were more extreme than me, who used violence against the things that they opposed. I became more and more attracted to their points of view, which led me to become engaged in the early squatting movement in my area. The first real "house fight" was in a university city named Goettingen. I don't recall the exact date nowadays, but the house is still occupied three decades later.

Due to my pacifistic mindset I got very involved in the peace movement as well. In those times, the USA planned to station nuclear midrange missiles in Germany and enhance the military forces of Germany. Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in the capitals of several European cities. Although there was a huge amount of aggressive police, the protesters at most events remained peaceful. But within the scene, there were more and more people acting differently, saying that violence against police was justified, since the police represented the government. During a smaller event, the tension escalated and it wasn't good at all. There was a silent escalation of weaponry: a simple slingshot which used steel balls as projectiles instead of ordinary pebbles. People proudly announced that with this device they could shoot through the helmet of a police officer. Actions from that point on became much more violent and I decided to stay away, since I am proud to be a pacifist and actually never in my life hurt another person with the intention of force.

Reality changed my outlook on life; I learned that people change their opinions rather quickly if it benefits them. Some of the same people that were demonstrating for peace in the eighties later got into politics. One of the most outspoken, Joschka Fischer, later authorized German bombing in Serbia while serving as Germany's Foreign Minister. The much-supported Green Party lost their bite. It's certainly tempting to sell one's ideals for a nice position in a company: you need to have a big car, a big house, and always out-compete your neighbors, so getting a nice salary and bonuses helps a lot. Fischer, who used to demonstrate against nuclear energy, nowadays consults Siemens corporation, one of the major makers of nuclear power plants in Germany. I wonder what his price was…

What I realized over time is that people generally support themselves rather than communities. Therefore I pretty much developed into a misanthrope, with not much left of the old spirit. My last little domain of involvement is a mindset that is open and tolerant, respecting people as they are and expecting that they respect my way as well. I think this is the first lesson we have to learn before we







can try to reach something better, but I also believe that the vast majority never learn it, even in alternative circles. I still think that we should try again and again and again and that those people trying to set up alternative spaces are amazing—I am just to tired to do much more than to give a "thumbs up."

I don't view myself as an artist; I just make pictures that develop somewhere in my brain as an idea. Obviously, other people like them as well and then call it art, which maybe makes me an artist in the end. Why I am doing this, I am not always sure. There is a drive that comes from inside, a way out of misanthropy. "Hey look, everything falls down, everyone is doomed, but we do it gracefully and with beauty." When I see a place, or sometimes a person, pictures pop up in my head and they kind of haunt me until I get them done, until I have stolen another soul. I take my inspirations from twisted dreams, music, and reality. The reality I see is a civilization that is already doomed but still dreams, a reality that tears people apart between their sucking lives and their dreams—at least those that open their eyes and see. This is often mixed with images generated by music, from various songs. Lately, Attrition and Empusae have inspired me, but also Ordo Rosarius Equilibrio and the Cure.

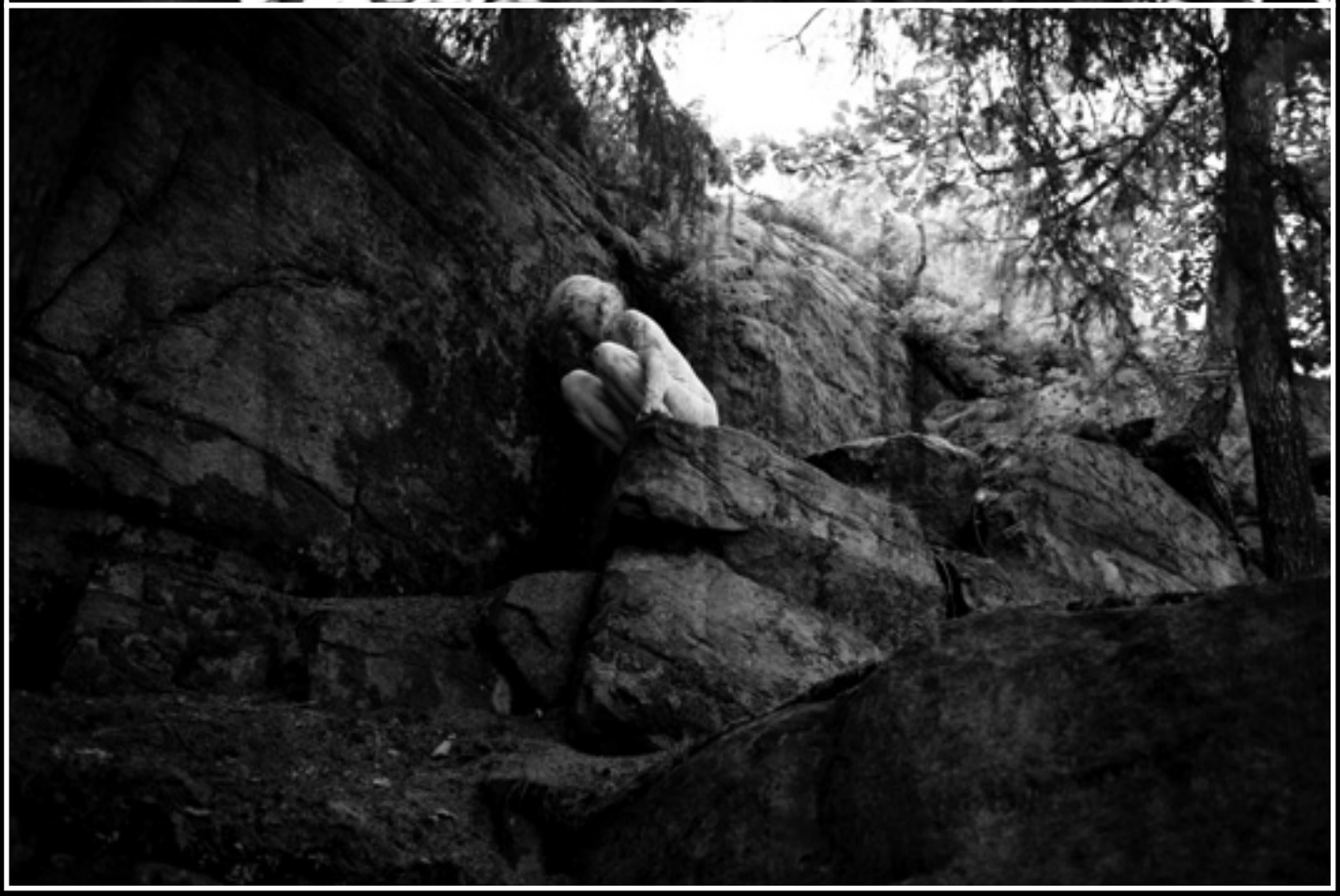
I don't photograph just women; I am generally interested in people, it's just that women are way more self-confident to explore new ways to express themselves. They often seek photography as a way to learn new experiences and as a path to cross their own borders. This is the moment, where they are entirely within their own selves and therefore the pure essence of their being is present. I do not manipulate the pictures to serve the common sense of beauty that's suggested by the marketing world. I work with overlays to enhance the desperation, the rottenness of the world, to show how beauty is hidden between the layers, within the ruins, within the dirt. Most people I work with are not young; most of them had already a life that has left traces everywhere, which makes them even more fascinating.

The last topic to cover is why *Graceless*, why the radical goth thing? It is an interesting contradiction in its own. "Goth people" at least in Germany, are not the ones considered radical, they are more introverted and passive. Therefore it is sometimes hard to find examples where they achieved something, or even fight for something. Even if they live their own ideals, they usually don't take them into the outside world; they do what they need to do, and if others join them fine, if not fine as well.

It is obvious that the public view on goth in the US is a completely different one than in Germany or even Japan. In Japan people think I look cute, while in Madison, Wisconsin a 12 year-old started to cry when he saw me, hid behind his mum and said, "I am soo scared." In Germany, no one gives a shit. Since those reactions are totally different, the public view must be different. So *Graceless* is a very good chance to bring up a different point of view, to bridge between cultures that share a certain philosophy and maybe even open the eyes of a few blind people.

Holger's work can be found online at WWW.SEVENTH-SIN.DE.

















touch me and die!



i came to dance.

MISOGYGOTH

or: goth misogyny

by Enola Dismay

i'd been having a great night at the club, mostly dancing by myself. a man handed me a wristband with bullets on it and told me that his friend wanted me to have it. he walked away after giving it to me and i gave myself a "why not?" shrug and awkwardly put it on. a little while after, the man who'd given me the wristband pointed at it on my body and gave me a thumbs up and nice smile of approval. i was a little worried that his friend would reveal his identity to me and that i would feel obligated to, i don't know, kiss them [i use "them" singularly because there is no way for me to know the gender of the man's friend] or something. being a person paranoid not only about the cops but also about the supernatural, i thought "shit! some asshole put a spell on me and now i'm gonna fall in love with this douchebag or macho bro or whatever!" after i realized that i was not going to fall in love with an objectifying jerk [because love spells don't work on me, duh.] i decided to keep the gift, even though it's not vegan, and that i had experienced a kind and mysterious gesture.

based on what very little i know of this person, i would not categorize them as a misogynist, but what is it that made me worry so much?

gender roles and misogyny

misogyny is a term which means, simply, the hatred of women. usually by a man, but not always. beyond the simple definition, a misogynist can be anyone who holds a distasteful opinion of women as a group. someone who thinks that women are worth less than men is a misogynist. a lot of times people don't realize that they treat women

as if they are worth less than men, and maybe they have never asked themselves if they believe this. a good example of this is the way men are encouraged to sleep around and women are put down as sluts and whores for doing the same. another one is the way a 25-year-old man will call himself a man or a guy and a 25-year-old woman a girl.

the first goths i hung out with when i was a teenager would make comments about all of the girls in our circle needing to be barefoot and pregnant, in the kitchen. i don't know if i just happened to be hanging out with the worst goths i could find. i'm not even sure i consider all of those people to be misogynists, but their behaviour perpetuated that attitude. it's like when people tell racist jokes but assure you that they, themselves, are "totally not racist."

at another club, a man flicked his cigarette at another man who he heard was "obsessed with his girlfriend." sparks of testosterone flew in all of the wrong directions and i wondered if anyone had asked the girlfriend how she felt and how she wanted the situation to be dealt with. it's so foreign to me. it seems controlling and possessive and i'd forgotten that this is how many relationships are. i wonder if goth girlfriends know that they are not the property of their boyfriends, that they are not an object to bicker over, no matter how loud or famous the boyfriends are. i wondered what the situation actually was, suspecting it to have been some over-dramatic gossip overreacted to by petty sycophants. why don't you try talking about it?

there is an interview on the internet with dinah cancer and l. ron jeremy of the deathrock band 45 grave. the interviewer, lexington lee, asks dinah what her influence is as a woman in the past in the LA punk scene, and dinah begins a short list of three women who were the lead singers in bands in the 70s, two from the UK and one from san francisco, saying that at the beginning there weren't that many women around, but "there's a lot of us today."

i can think of some female fronted projects and i know of some female solo acts and djs. i know of very few all lady bands. most of my favorite bands are made up of all men or are mostly men with a female singer with a pretty face... i mean voice. when are we going to rise up and make our voices heard in this scene? i want goth riot grrrl!

i am not dancing for you to sexualize me. i'm not sitting here by myself to look available. i'm not wearing this skirt because i want to feel some stranger's hand through the diamonds of my fishnets. i'm not here for you. i don't even know you.

goth clubs and pick-up culture

i don't believe that stepping into a goth club should be like stepping into the real world—the real world in which people make small talk about money, cars, and booze. i go to the goth club to dance and

on a good night i can be surprised to meet someone who i have something in common with. [no, i don't mean romantically.] when i first moved to the bay area i tried to make friends at the goth clubs in san francisco, for i gothily had no one. this never worked for me and i ended up taking invitations into friendships with the gutter punks and crusties on telegraph ave in berkeley. probably this is what led me to where i am today.

a friend mentioned something to me about how i must get hit on a lot at a club we frequent, and i told him that i hadn't had that experience. he said something like "oh, that's odd. everyone talks about it being such a meat market." well, a goth club is technically a night club, i guess. but i don't want it to be. night clubs are places people go to on reality television dating shows to grind up against someone they've just met. i don't go to night clubs. i am interested in dark subculture. i'm not interested in getting drunk and trying to find someone to take home or—i guess, as a homeless person, though i imagine it would appear to others to be because i'm a woman—go home with. this hadn't yet been my experience at that particular club but it has been at others, and it has been my experience elsewhere in the goth scene.

i am not dancing for you to sexualize me. i'm not sitting here by myself to look available. i'm not wearing this skirt because i want to feel some stranger's hand through the diamonds of my fishnets. i'm not here for you. i don't even know you.

pick-up culture and rape culture

did you know that we live in a rape culture? it's okay if you didn't. a lot of people don't talk about it or even know what it means. wikipedia says "rape culture is a term used within women's studies and feminism, describing a culture in which rape and other sexual violence (usually against women) are common and in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices, and media condone, normalize, excuse, or encourage sexualized violence."

every day we are faced with rape culture through pick-up culture, and the goth scene has shown no interest to me in getting away from this. i am not saying that people are raped at goth clubs every night. i am saying that a lot of times i go out, i am faced with gestures and words which perpetuate rape culture. did you know that if someone is drunk and hitting on you and then you have sex, you could be sexually assaulting them? how drunk is this person? how well do you know them? can you tell if they're blacked out? even if they're not blacked out, their reality is thrown off and if they were sober it's possible that they wouldn't be interested.

this is what it is like, day-to-day, all over. goth clubs and shows have not revealed much difference to me than what i would unfortunately expect to find in mainstream pop music dance clubs, hip-hop shows, or alternative rock mentality. i get worried that someone might put something in my drink. i feel like i need to move my body because someone is staring at it. i feel on edge and unsafe a lot of the time.

i grew up tricked into the thought process of having something to give to men. or, of having to give something to men. [the roles we are taught to play based on our biological genders not only put us in very unhealthy places by teaching us to either submit or dominate without realizing and that we are different from those of "the opposite sex," but also by teaching us that it's natural only to have heterosexual and heteroromantic feelings. but i feel like the goth scene overcomes this a little more than the mainstream.] i grew up under the impression that i'm required to appreciate any attention i can get. growing up was learning to be quiet and pretty. no one told me otherwise and the tone of life mimicking media based in oppressive culture shown as an acceptable, unquestioned truth led me to assume that it's normal to be touched by some stranger, especially if he says i'm pretty, and that i shouldn't say anything if i don't feel that great about it—that actually there was something wrong with me if i don't want it—and that i should consider dating the person touching me, showing interest. i think that i am not alone in this experience.

when i went goth a little over ten years ago, none of this changed. the goths i met were just like all of those people in all of those movies i watched as a way to ignore all of those people in my life who were just like all of those people in the movies. [only the goths were a little more interesting and sometimes told different jokes.] but a very nice thing about subculture is that it can be formulated to resist certain parts of all-encompassing culture. looking back on the post-punk/tradgoth beginning in the late 1970s, we are shown how true this is. i feel like the scene evolved into a more apolitical who-gives-a-fuck environment than it once was. there were bands who sung songs against war, against television, against police, against capitalism and—of course, the one we still hold tightly onto—against organized religion, specifically christianity. but even those bands in the early days and their views could have used a little more work. a lot of those bands were bands of men who spoke up against government oppression but also had lyrics which objectified or otherwise belittled women. it could have gotten better from there, but has it? what if we actively stood together against things including, but not limited to, sexism, sexual harassment, oppressive gender roles, and rape culture even though they are normalized in the society we were brought up in? why don't we actually form a new society to escape into? why don't we run for the shadows and slip into something a little more comfortable? i don't believe that anyone anywhere is ever completely safe, but why don't we try to give ourselves a reason or two—or, hell, a thousand; we deserve a thousand—to feel safe in our scene?

as some predators are known to say after making a person uncomfortable: "it doesn't hurt to ask."✳

Photo by Courtney Ballantine.



THE NEW HEAVEN & THE NEW EARTH

I admit, when I first started work on Graceless, *I had no idea that there was such breadth to the realm of darkness. But thanks to DIY label Edible Onion, I've had a chance to explore the world of dark indie music. And every release put out by Edible Onion comes in handcrafted packaging.*

One of the finer examples of the genre is apocalyptically-themed The New Heaven & The New Earth, from Philadelphia. The project of Roger Alejandro Martinez and Jefferey Russ is well-described by their official bio as writing "dark, vocal-harmony laden chamber pop songs, set to lyrics that deal with mythology, madness and death." I had a chance to speak with songwriter Roger Martinez about the project, the label, and the Catholic imagery that weaves its way through his music.

Graceless: *First of all, could you introduce yourself and your project?*

Roger: I'm Roger Alejandro Martinez, and my project is called The New Heaven & The New Earth.

Graceless: *The label you're on, Edible Onion. Could you tell us a bit about that? Why handmade album packaging? Why now?*

Roger: Edible Onion was started by Philly musician Darian Scatton a few years ago. It started out as a means of putting out some of his own material with his band Scallion, and quickly grew from there as he started working with more mu-

> I don't think that art should be so didactic, or if it is didactic it must first and foremost be aesthetically sound. This speaks to the whole "art-for-art's-sake" vs. "art-in-service-of-the-revolution" debate. In my view, art-for-art's-sake is art-in-service-of-the-revolution, because a healthy society should nurture free expression.

sicians both here in Philly and elsewhere around the country. Darian's a great guy—good-natured but with a strong sense of ethics. I believe the handmade approach is his means of giving every release a special, personal feel to stand in contrast to the world of digital mass production. It can be extremely taxing to work on releases of hundreds and, say, cut out little stained-glass windows on each one, but it makes for something that's much more of a holistic work of art.

The other thing about Edible Onion is that with the label, we've managed to create a small community of like-minded musicians and artists. It's difficult enough to be touring and putting out records on our limited budget even with the support of friends and respected peers. But it would be far more difficult without that support.

Graceless: *Tell me more about that. What can you all do for each other, as a community of musicians and artists, to support each other? What do you get out of that kind of collaboration?*

Roger: Well, aside from the more prosaic things of, say, playing in one another's bands if needed, or sharing tour contacts, the aspect of moral support is pretty crucial. The world we inhabit is a mercurial one, especially when we're on the road. You can play a string of great shows, and then you play an awful one that required a 10 hour drive to get to, and then your car breaks down, and now you're broke again and you're not sure how you're going to get to the next show. We've survived plenty of things like this collectively, which makes it much more tolerable when they happen.

There's also the creative aspect. As I mentioned above, before I started working with the Edible Onion folks, I didn't realize how open the possibilities were musically. I had plenty of ideas, but I was always under the impression that you needed money behind you to realize them, and you wouldn't get money behind you unless you made a few initial artistic compromises. The message that I got after joining the fold with Edible Onion was that you could make whatever kind of music you wanted to, and you didn't need to wait to have money to do it.

Ben from Br'er had an approach to arranging that made a huge impact on my songwriting and recording process. I'm oversimplifying it a lot, but in essence: whatever instrument you want to put in your recording, either learn how to play it or find whoever you know who does and record them. Worry about the live arrangement later.

And when I started working with Jeff in New Heaven, he brought with him the sensibilities of classical and electronic music. This changed everything for me.

Graceless: *Also, if you'd like, can you talk more about what it means to be making handmade things? What is your opinion on these times of digital reproduction?*

Roger: I love the handmade aspect of Edible Onion, I think it makes the art look great, I love the sound of vinyl and I definitely think it distinguishes what we do from a lot of other stuff out there. That being said, the handmade aspect is primarily Darian's idea. I think it's a wonderful idea but I'd be lying if I said I personally had any serious ideological fervor behind it. I don't directly share his ideals in this regard, though I certainly respect them. For me, the pride I have for what we do in Edible Onion is the quality of the music. I'm very proud to be sharing a label with bands like Br'er; The Horror, The Horror; and Snowcaps. I think what they do is adventurous, challenging, and emotionally honest. The art crystallizes this aesthetic message, in part because of the intensity of handmaking each label, but mostly, I feel, because the art is just as beautiful as the music. I think theoretically we could do this with mass production, but it would probably be a lot more expensive.

As for the second part of your question, digital mass production is a complicated issue. Here we have, essentially, a technological revolution that has been occurring for the past, say, 15-20 years. Now with anything that powerful or transformative, there's going to be pitfalls. People get addicted to things like Facebook, people get bombarded with advertisements, but the same can be said of television on both counts. With regards to music, we have shitty mp3s, but the positive side of that is that we have the death of the CD and subsequently the rebirth of vinyl. We also have declining record sales, but in most cases that hurts labels more than artists, and in the case of major labels, that may be a good thing.

I can't necessarily say that the positive outweighs the negative, but I think that if we sift through the weeds we may be able to make out the seeds of cultural egalitarianism budding from these technological advances. It used to be that if you grew up in or near a hip urban area (which often, again,

means coming from money) you might have a better chance of getting exposed to better music. But now it doesn't necessarily matter if the only record store in your town is the Best Buy, because a kid can download an obscure record s/he heard about on a message board no matter where s/he lives. Now by no means am I saying that the internet is a replacement of a real, live community, but I think it helps expose people to things even if they are isolated, so long as they have the desire.

Graceless: *If you google your band name, you get some interesting results... there's your band, but mostly there's page after page about the Christian apocalypse. What led you to that name?*

Roger: A couple of things. A lot of things were changing for me when I started the band. Edible Onion was just starting. I had gone on my first couple of full US tours with another Edible Onion band called Br'er. I had been playing with bands before that but I was unable to get the sort of sound and arrangements I wanted because of band politics and things like that. But now I was coming into more contact with people who could, through home recording, make music with complex and challenging arrangements without having a lot of money. To me everything felt new. So when I started this band I kept thinking back to this passage in the Book of Revelation that I really liked in which everything that existed before was violently swept away and new things came into its place.

Which brings me to the second point about the name. I was raised Catholic. I rejected the religion in my early adulthood, but I always still found the art and imagery fascinating. Particularly the old, frightening stuff. Stained glass, requiem masses, and so on. One particular subject that I always found fascinating was eschatology, the study of the supposed end times. In essence, I think this makes fascinating folklore, and is sort of a treasure trove of imagery. This imagery often compounds ideas that I want to express in my songs. For instance, the song "Noah" details a struggle between heightened emotional, irrational states—mania, in essence—and reason. I feel the religious imagery highlights this struggle because states of religious euphoria can be considered closely related to madness.

Eschatological imagery becomes problematic when it is taken too literally, and unfortunately this has very real, very frightening ramifications in the real world. But here it is literature and mythology. I may not stick with this sort of apocalyptic Christian imagery through further releases, but there will always be that implication in the name, and I am always interested in the subject of applying mythical concepts to real life on a literary level. I feel like artistic ideas can make a bigger impact if they work on multiple levels, which is why I think so much of this folklore has survived so long in the first place.

Graceless: *It's actually quite interesting, the idea of how much Catholic (and more broadly, Christian) imagery influences the gothic/dark/what-have-you scene. I'm fascinated with it. Do you have more to say about how the symbols and aesthetics of Christianity have been turned to such a... well, if not anti-Christian, then at least not-Christian end? Why are we so heavily influenced by them?*

Roger: It's funny, I remember when I was in high school and college, I frequently wondered to myself why none of the so-called "gothic" artists out there ever culled influence from baroque or renaissance music, or from medieval aesthetics. Then I discovered artists like David Tibet and Baby Dee, and I realized that in many cases they absolutely do.

The history of the early Catholic church is intertwined and marred with darkness. Sometimes the church was reflecting the darkness of its time, sometimes it was, as we all know, causing it. Since Vatican II, the Catholic church has moved increasingly away from that sort of dark imagery, but in some instances the mantle has been taken up by secular artists who still feel a need to reflect those aesthetics, but not necessarily declare allegiance to any religion or god.

But why would a non-religious or secular artist want to use such symbols? In one way, a Biblical reference is similar to a literary reference. But there's a bit more to it than that. When I started getting into Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, the ideas they had about archetypes and mythos really appealed to me. Religious, or more broadly, cultural traditions, offer a wealth of public symbols that carry a lot of weight. This is in part because they connect to fundamental aspects of the human psyche, in part because they hold so much power, even occasionally destructive power, over certain people, and in part because they sound so ancient or even anachronistic. Also, going back to the whole notion of heightened irrational states, I think that the part of the brain that desires art is probably closely linked to the part of the brain that creates or desires these states. This is part of the reason why, for instance, madness, love, death, religion, and drugs are such frequent subjects of poetry and song.

I've seen contemporary songwriters make excellent use of Christian imagery for Christian, non-Christian, and anti-Christian ends. I think it's all in how you use it and what you want to say with it.

Generally, if I make a Biblical or any other literary reference, it's intended to highlight the idea or feeling I'm trying to express in the song. In the song "Simon," for instance, I'm not trying to make a statement in favor of or against religion any more than I'm trying to make a statement in favor of or against *Lord of the Flies*. I don't think that art should be so didactic, or if it is didactic it must first and foremost be aesthetically sound. This speaks to the whole "art-for-art's-sake" vs. "art-in-service-of-the-revolution" debate. In my view, art-for-art's-sake is art-in-service-of-the-revolution, because a healthy society should nurture free expression.✳

The New Heaven & The New Earth can be found online at www.myspace.com/thenewheavenandthenewearth.



In sharp contrast to the earlier era of gothic subculture, today's fashions are readily available from mainstream vendors who care nothing for our aesthetic but for the money it can bring them. In this cheapshot of a photo used for illustration, two goths walk, in full attire, away from a bank of ATMs. Photo by Holger Karas.

This article was originally published (in German) in *Schillerndes Dunkel*, Ed. Alexander Nym, Plöttner Verlag 2010. It appears by permission of the author.

GOTHIC CONSUMPTION

by Jenly

That the gothic subculture got its start in the late seventies as a splinter of the already-fringe punk scene is difficult to imagine given its current integration into mainstream culture. Mass-produced goth fashion is available in American malls. Nine Inch Nails, Rammstein, and Marilyn Manson play at sold-out stadiums. Some of the most wildly-popular novels and movies aimed at teen and pre-teen audiences in recent years have been the dark-themed Harry Potter and Twilight series. The word "gothic" no longer conjures up images of 12th- to 16th-century cathedrals or 18th century British horror novels, but instead of young people clad in black with funny haircuts and dark makeup.

However, many people who identify themselves as goths would argue that these chain stores, popular bands, and trendy vampire and wizard novels are *not* gothic—instead they are simply second-rate mainstream imitations of the real thing. And they would argue that the scene, in its current state, is no longer a subculture. Is this a uniquely American phenomena? Probably not, given the popularity of gothic music and fashion in Europe, although it can certainly be argued that the societal push for consumerism in the US has strengthened the commercialization of the scene there.

The American cult of consumerism

...Choose a fucking big television, choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players, and electrical tin openers. Choose good health, low cholesterol, and dental insurance. Choose fixed interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose your friends. Choose leisure wear and matching luggage. Choose a three piece suite on hire purchase in a range of fucking fabrics...
—Trainspotting

If the rise of industrialization brought consumerism to the middle class in the mid- to late-19th century, then it was the post-war boom which brought consumerism to the working class. For the first time in history, nearly everyone was able to consume mass-produced goods.

In the minds of many Americans, the middle class and the working class have merged into one. In 2008, according to the Pew Research Center, 53% of Americans described themselves as middle class—but the annual incomes reported from within this group ranged from under $20,000 to over $150,000. What seems to be most important to this self-definition is whether or not one feels in line with one's neighbors. This desire for equivalence is particularly strong in a land where "all men are created equal" and are "endowed ... with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The US is a land where, in theory, every person has the opportunity to better himself and build his own fortune. We all want to believe that we are in fact equal to our fellow citizens. We want the same possessions, to take part in the same leisure activities. How we measure up seems to define our success in the venerated Pursuit of Happiness. But in this search for equality, we become homogenized. We've become the United States of Generica, a land of strip malls and chain stores and popular entertainment.



This increased pressure to conform creates an increased interest, in young people, to break away from society as it has been set up for them by their parents. The beatniks, the hippies, the punks, the new-agers, the goths. However, the US entertainment and consumable goods industries have become extremely efficient at identifying and co-opting emerging subcultures that can be marketed back to the mainstream as consumable trends.

Scripted Darkness

Hollywood's interest in dark and macabre themes is nothing new. The original vampire film, 1922's *Nosferatu*, led to countless other screen adaptations loosely based on the classic Stoker novel. The 1960s television series *The Munsters* and *The Addam's Family* predated the development of any recognizable gothic scene. Even movies such as *The Hunger* (1983), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), and *Interview with a Vampire* (1994), which postdate the rise of gothic subculture, were certainly not aimed solely for a goth audience. What has changed over time is that the marketing machine of Hollywood has begun inspiring spin-off series, clothing lines, toys, novels, and countless other products to push films and television shows and increase their popularity.

Television series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed* used dark imagery and stereotypical characters and were often marketed as "gothic," even if their plots were rather conservative and had little or nothing to do with gothic subculture. US television series such as *Southpark*, *NCIS*, and *Venture Brothers* have regularly appearing "goth" characters. Other series such as *CSI* have featured episodes portraying goth characters for an episode or two. These television portrayals of goths often feature the over-the-top stereotypes established by the media, fixing these stereotypes even more firmly into the minds of young people discovering the scene for the first time.

Over-the-counter goth

In general, gothic subculture was not a commercial success in its first wave in the US in the 1980s. In a large city with a serious underground music scene, one might have found a few independent stores peddling occult paraphernalia, BDSM gear, or army surplus clothing. Goths who wanted to express themselves through their clothing found a piece here and there, often resorting to secondhand stores or handmade outfits and accessories. Handcrafted zines distributed through the mail and

passed hand-to-hand spread album reviews and concert reports on a rather human level. Since there were few night clubs dedicated solely to dark-themed music, scene members organized events when and where they could afford to rent space.

When gothic subculture rose again in the nineties, the combined interests of fashion and entertainment industries all wanted a piece of the action. Mainstream labels from haute couture to discount chainstores produced lines of mostly black women's clothing touched with lace and velvet in the gothic tradition. Bands with a dark look were promoted as "goth" even when their sound and lyrics did not exactly agree with the tastes of actual goths. These mainstream offerings showed up within the goth scene, influencing playlists and dress-codes at parties and clubs.

Specialized chain stores such as Hot Topic and Torrid are now regular fixtures in malls across the States, selling the typical cliches of goth fashion and products now considered to be related to the genre. Now suburban teens can simply walk in and consume all things "goth": faux corsets by Morbid Threads, phat pants covered in bondage straps by TrippNYC, and anything and everything emblazoned with *Emily the Strange* or characters from the film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

Is this Goth?

As Hollywood characters and branded fashion labels became deeper and deeper imbedded into the goth scene there was less of a basis for the argument that such things didn't belong. The questions "What is goth?" and "Is _____ goth?" make up a good portion of the discussion on online gothic forums, which remain important in such a large country with a suburban spread that prevents young people from meeting regularly face to face. The now well-known saying "Nobody knows you're a dog on the internet," which originated with Peter Steiner's cartoon in the July 5, 1993 *New Yorker*, rings true here. There is no meaningful gate-keeping on these websites. Anybody can create a user account and profess his expertise about gothic subculture, but this doesn't stop newcomers from taking their advice or the media from quoting these postings when reporting on the goth scene.

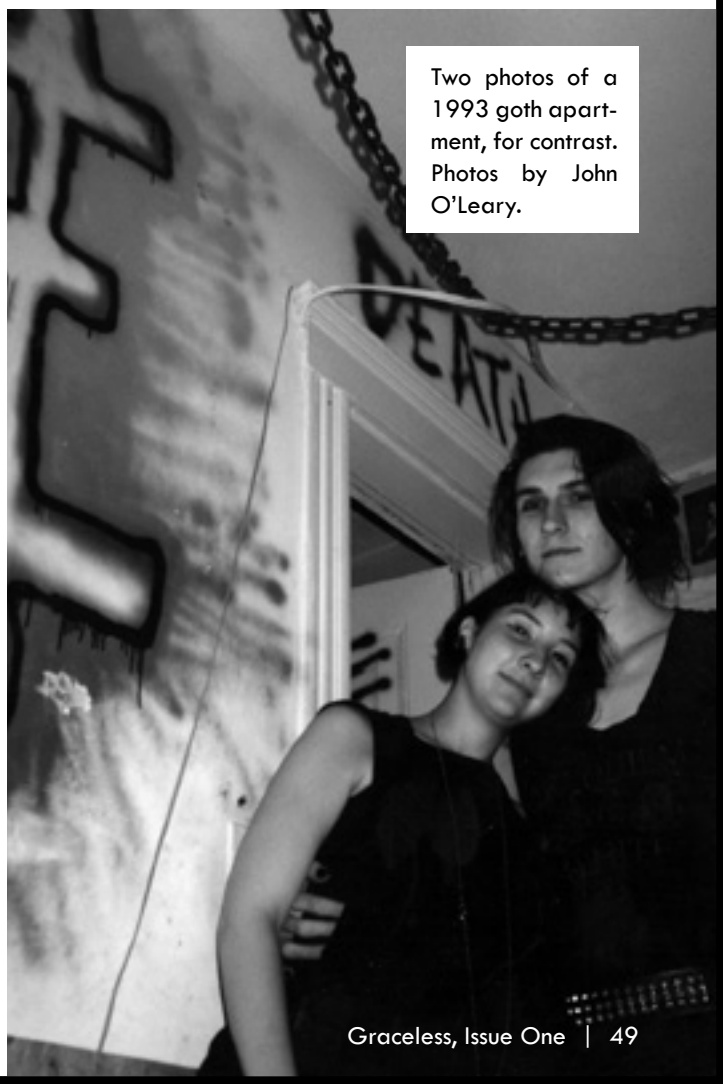
Increased media reporting naturally comes along with the rise of commercialization, especially in the US where the media is particularly influenced by corporate interests. Most innocently, this reporting happens through press releases, leading up to basically pre-written articles and pre-produced reports on a product or a topic related to a product. More insidious but more difficult to define is the influence of corporate ownership of media outlets. For example: Disney owns ABC Television Network, and is a major shareholder in Lifetime Entertainment and A&E Television; in addition to its film and television studios, Time-Warner also controls CNN. It is difficult to imagine that the interests of large corporations never influence the media outlets under their financial control.

Regardless of the validity of its sources, the more media reports on the popularity of gothic subculture, the more newcomers arrive on the scene, mimicking what the media has reported to them as "gothic," and the more the scene begins to resemble a sanitized, mainstream-friendly version of its former self, a version which no longer needs be created but can simply be consumed.

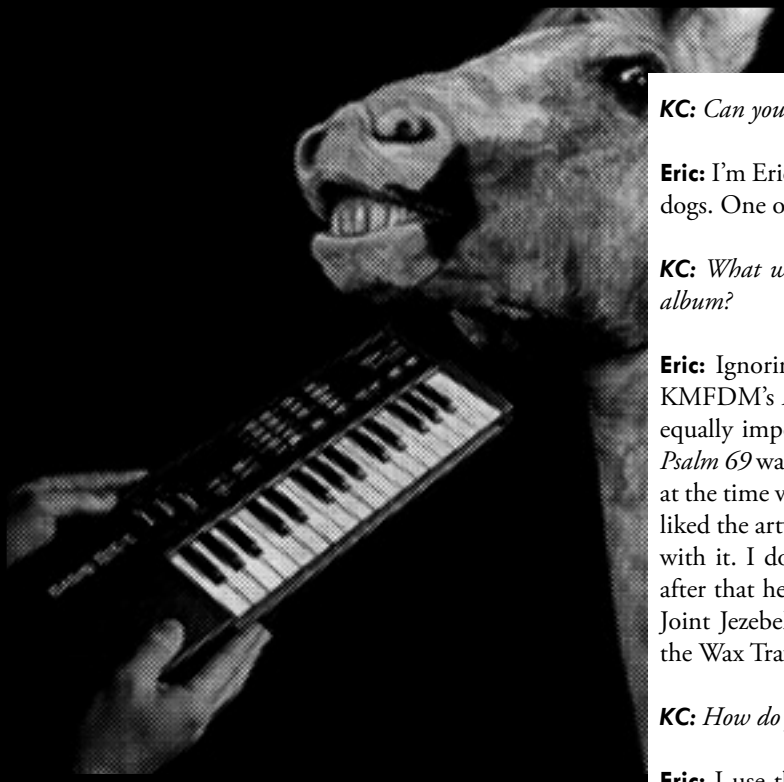
Where does the subculture end and the demographic begin?

In sociologist David Riesman's work in the 1950s, he made a distinction between a majority, "which passively accepted commercially provided styles and meanings, and a 'subculture' which actively sought a minority style ... and interpreted it in accordance with subversive values." (Riesman, David [1950]. "Listening to popular music," *American Quarterly*, 2, p. 359-71) If mainstream culture appropriates the identifying style (music, fashion, literature, etc.) of a subculture, then the subculture becomes unidentifiable as such and can only maintain its status as subculture by evolving further away from the mainstream by adopting newer styles even further from the mainstream.

The visible changes in the music, clubs, and fashion of the goth scene over the last fifteen years are not changes toward extremity, but rather closer toward the mainstream, blurring the line between subculture and scene.✳



Two photos of a 1993 goth apartment, for contrast. Photos by John O'Leary.



interview by Kathleen Chausse

EVERY-THING GOES COLD

KC: *Can you tell our readers who you are and about your project?*

Eric: I'm Eric Gottesman of Everything Goes Cold. I live with two tiny dogs. One of them keeps peeing on stuff.

KC: *What was your introduction to industrial, and your first industrial album?*

Eric: Ignoring Nine Inch Nails, it was either Ministry's *Psalm 69* or KMFDM's *Nihil*. I got them within a week of each other, and they're equally important to me. I'm sure that shows glaringly in my music. *Psalm 69* was sent to the guitarist in the high school punk band I was in at the time via a Columbia House shipping error. He kept it because he liked the artwork, and then played it all for us and we became obsessed with it. I don't even know how he discovered KMFDM, but shortly after that he called me and told me to immediately go listen to "Juke Joint Jezebel", which I did, and promptly purchased. Then I bought the Wax Trax black box. That was the big thing.

KC: *How do you feel about the imagery you use?*

Eric: I use the imagery I use because I'm secretly infatuated with my artist, Andy/stitchmind, and I want to keep on owing him money so he has to keep calling and demanding that I pay him.

KC: *How did you come up with the idea of using a fridge, and having comics made?*

Eric: Well, nobody buys shit because they all suck, so we asked ourselves: "What do jerks who totally suck buy?" Then we realized the answer was Caustic albums, and I was already on one of those. So we went to the only very slightly different inquiry of "What do I keep blowing all of my money on, despite being a 30 year-old grown man who is not living in his parents' basement?", and the answer was "comic books."

KC: *Mentioning Caustic, what other artists have you worked for/with?*

Eric: Bands that I have legitimately or semi-legitimately been a member of (meaning played multiple complete shows and/or worked with coherently in the studio): Ayria, Caustic, Everything Goes Cold, Psyclon Nine, See Colin Slash, xp8. That's six. I think that sounds right? Anyhow, "significant" guest appearances (multiple times/more than hopping on for one song): Grendel, Terrorfakt, jesus I know there are a bunch more, but I actually can't think of… oh yeah! I forgot Deathline International from the first list, and Unter Null. Then with dinky little one time spots with Chemlab and Cyanotic, that brings me to 12... but I should actually be at 13, so I think I'm still forgetting somebody. Oh, I played "Relax and Ride It" with Alter Der Ruine at Kinetik [festival] this year, which was *totally epic.*

KC: *Having worked with all these artists, how do you think you've improved in your art?*

Eric: Well, mostly I've become a more effective live performer, I suppose. I cringe when I see video of myself from more than a year ago. I guess I don't think I was bad, but I've definitely become steadily better as I've done it more. There was a time that Jared asked me to sing "Suicide Jag" with him at a Chemlab show and I was catastrophically drunk when I got on stage. That was bad. I've learned not to do that. I had a *reason* for being that drunk. Perhaps not a good reason, but a reason!

KC: *What's your view on music and what are you trying to express?*

Eric: First, what I am trying to express. I think that's easier. It's all very meta. I basically write industrial music about industrial music. I may address personal or political issues lyrically or in my process, but basically every piece of music I work on is really ultimately about how much I love industrial. I sample and refer to other industrial music in my own songs, I explore different styles of industrial music in individual songs, I explore the traditional themes of industrial music because they are such, not because I specifically care about that theme as an independent entity.

I have found that there is a certain cartoonishness, and at times even a conscious silliness, to what we are all doing, which creates the more easily perceptible theme. Industrial music is in many ways the crazed, manic, and at times futile supervillain of modern music. Thus Edgar, the screaming angry refrigerator robot, and the whole backstory.

Also, go back to the beginning of this answer and reread "it's all very meta" with an appropriately sarcastic tone. I'm not *that* douchey.

KC: *Why are you doing it?*

Eric: I have no idea right now. I can tell you the answer I would have given a couple of years ago, but I don't think it's valid anymore. I'm going through some sort of transitionary artistic phase personally right now, so I think the best I can say is "this is who I am, and this is what I do."

Oh also, I forgot I was in C/A/T.

KC: *What do you think of the current state of industrial and it's culture and how your projects fits in to this picture?*

Eric: First of all, I think it's key to note that everybody always thinks things have decayed from how they were when they were first introduced to this culture, and that things had been even better before they got there. So while I may not enjoy a lot of new stuff as much as I still love things I heard when I was 15, don't take that to mean that I necessarily think poorly of it. I've been saying for some time now that I think we're in a difficult transitional period, and I had hoped that would be done by now, but it isn't, and in some ways that's healthy.

The "mainstream" (and I use that term very loosely) part of the scene that was all terror EBM and the like a couple of years ago has splintered in to a bunch of different microgenres and shot off in a zillion directions at once—a few things stand out, popularity-wise, like TBM, but we have a pretty broad mishmash of different ideas about music and culture that are all happening on about the same level right now. One of those things is this cyberpunk revival thing, which I suppose I'm part of, but that's an idea that's had a somewhat difficult time finding its audience, as we sometimes have. Because we and bands like us are so rock-oriented when compared to a lot of the more popular bands out right now, clubs are hesitant to play us and it can be tricky finding appropriate shows. Bands like Angelspit, for example, have a very rock feel at times, but because they don't have any acoustic instruments I think that promoters feel more comfortable with something like that than they do with us.

Interestingly, you'll note that there's a ton of healthy collaboration happening between the more club-friendly stuff and stuff like ours—I think the musicians get it, but it's confusing for fans and promoters. Take a look, for example, at Left Spine Down and Hardwire's lists of remixers, and you'll see a ton of people who you hear at clubs every week. We all swap live members, remixes, studio work, etc., and it's great. But with so many different musics and cultures happening at once, it's easy for the casual listener especially to get lost, and of course the most interesting and different things coming out of all this are the quickest to be dragged under.

Everybody always thinks things have decayed from how they were when they were first introduced to this culture, and that things had been even better before they got there.

Frustrating as all this may be for me from a business perspective, as a fan, it is great to see so much different stuff being made. There was certainly a ton of great stuff being made when futurepop and terror EBM respectively reigned supreme, but it was always just heaping on more of the same kind of thing. That's not happening now, and that is definitely a good thing.

KC: *Any final thoughts?*

[Eric here presents the interviewer with the picture of a horse and a keyboard]

KC: *Horses with keyboards people.*

Eric: Dude. Look at that horse's fucking face. It knows. *It knows.*✳

Everything Goes Cold can be found online at WWW.EVERYTHINGGOESCOLD.COM

by Margaret Killjoy

"BLAH, BLAH, YOU'RE NOT UNIQUE, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH, BLAH."

For those who don't know, I am a cis-gendered man [cis-gendered meaning that I'm not transgendered or transexual]. I often wear skirts and my name is Margaret, but I've usually got a beard and I'm not trying to present myself to the world as anything but the cis-man I am. I only point this out because it's relevant to this anecdote:

I was in the market in Amsterdam, waiting for my squatmate to buy bread, when a woman approached me.

"Why are you wearing a skirt?" she asked.

I shrugged. "I like skirts," I said.

"You only wear skirts because all of your friends wear skirts," she assumed aloud. Assuming aloud is a terrible way to ingratiate yourself to anyone.

"No, actually," I corrected her. "Almost none of the men I'm friends with wear skirts." (Which is thankfully less true now than it was then.)

"Then you only do it to be different," she determined.

The weirdest part? I think she was trying to hit on me. She certainly wasn't doing a good job.

People often mistake a rejection of mainstream culture for a rejection of culture as a whole. I've heard it all the time, the great cliche: "Goths dress weird because they want to be unique, but they just dress the same as each other." I'm going to go ahead and suggest you've heard this before yourself. Hell, I going to go ahead and assume (in print, which is potentially even worse than assuming aloud) that many of you have even agreed with this presumed hypocrisy on the part of subculture.

I think we've heard the cliche so much that we've internalized it, that we believe it. Many of us believe we're dressing the way we do because we want to be different. But that's not true. If we're dressing to distinguish ourselves, we're doing it to distinguish ourselves from *them*, from the mainstream. From the culture that rejected us or that we never wanted to be part of in the first place.

But mostly, we're dressing to better represent our true selves. People are often dismissive of aesthetics, but the value of living a fascinating life, in aesthetically-pleasing surroundings, cannot be overstated. I am, and will always be, happier to live in an attic, a belfry, a rundown warehouse, or DIY house (well, I appreciate heat and running water, I admit) than I am to live in a white-walled, carpeted, square apartment somewhere. This desire for an



A nineteenth-century etching, an example of the over-dramatic, stereotypical shit that I like.

aesthetic that pleases us is absolutely reflected in how we dress. Why shouldn't it be?

In a perfect world, we would each be free to present ourselves however we saw fit, without societal repercussions. But the societal repercussions for being a freak are still quite severe most anywhere. I've been a "weirdo" for half my life now, but there are still things that I would like to do that I only don't because of how people will view me. I applaud those brave enough to go further than I have.

But it's true, most goths (or punks, hipsters, hip-hoppers, metalheads, businesspeople, RV-drivers, the list goes on) dress in similar ways as one another. The reasons for this are many.

First and foremost, we of the counterculture aren't rejecting the concept of culture. We're rejecting our forced inclusion in mainstream culture, and yes, we're rejecting the mainstream's values. But a moron will realize that there will always be culture, there will still be values. There are still traditions. And while we'd be fools to stray so far as to become patriots of the gothic, there is nothing wrong in having pride in this culture that we've created or come into, that we continue to help shape.

There are four holidays that I care about. Two relate to science or paganism or whatever: the winter and summer solstices (the longest night and the longest day of the year). Another is Mayday, (May 1st, the anarchist's celebration of our martyrdom that has become the international day to celebrate the labor movement), and one is Halloween (or Day of the Dead. I'm not picky). Each represents concepts that I'm proud to identify with. Thanksgiving? Columbus Day? The Christian Easter? No thank you, to put it as politely as I can.

So I look like a goth. Or a crust punk. I'm a stereotype, I get that. I live in squats and have a dreaded mohawk and I have an anarchy tattoo. I wear all black and long skirts and I dance to fast music slowly—and melodramatically—and I have a Sisters of Mercy patch on my hoodie. But there is nothing wrong, or "conformist," in utilizing these cultural identifiers. First and foremost, they are aesthetically pleasing. Myself at 14 would be absolutely giddy to see who I've become by 28.

Secondly, symbols serve as… well, as symbols. As flags. Finding "your people" is one of the most important things in this world. While it's obviously stupid to get caught up in an entirely insular group (as both anarchists and goths are slightly too prone to doing), it's even more ridiculous to presume that I would want to spend the rest of my life around people whom I can't let my guard down around. I want to spend a slight majority of my time around people with whom I can take certain understandings more or less for granted, and I want to live in places that feel right to me.

What's more, there is no inherent value in dressing or acting differently than other people. Fashion (and personal aesthetics in general) is a folk art: no one owns it, no one dictates it. But we are naturally influenced by others, and there is no shame in this. No one decides who can and can't wear certain clothes.

Looking strange is also an incredibly useful filter. Bigots, by and large, either scream obscenities at me or leave me alone. People who judge people based on how they're dressed just don't talk to me. I know that if a "normal" dressed person (who is still dressing within the constraints of a culture that doesn't actually envelop the entire world or even entire countries or cities, same as most everyone else) gives me the time of day, that they're probably a decent person.

A final anecdote:

Last autumn I went into a cafe in Portland with a friend of mine who was as obviously as gothed up as I was. Seeing his band shirt, my friend struck up a conversation with the fellow, discussing Bay Area goth bands.

Here's where, dear reader, you might be hoping this anecdote ends with "and then gave us food for free or something." Alas it does not. Instead, he told us that he "loved goth music, but the people who dress the part ruin it." Pay no head to his New Thrill Parade shirt, of course.

Somehow, like the woman who commented on my skirt, I have the feeling he was trying to gain some kind of affinity with us. Sorry, hipster, it didn't work. I'm not too cool to be a goth. I never will be.✳

POST-HUMAN STUDIOS

Brian Cross and Rob Boyle are two-thirds of the pen-and-paper roleplaying game company Posthuman Studios, creators of the ground-breaking RPG Eclipse Phase. I first got interested in the game about a year ago, diving into the Creative Commons-licensed rulebook for days, soaking up the remarkable post-human cyberpunk atmosphere of the gameworld, complete with anarchists and capitalists squaring off in a doom-and-gloom solar system where humanity's continued existence cannot be taken for granted.

The pair have also written and developed for the seminal cyberpunk RPG Shadowrun, so I was beside myself when I realized that we all ran in more or less the same circles as radical goths. I tracked them down for an interview with all available haste, and was not disappointed. They told me about their projects, about the state of tabletop gaming, and about what it means to wear your politics on your sleeve in the gaming world.

The artwork accompanying the article is from the gamebook for Eclipse Phase, which, like this magazine, is licensed Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike.



Graceless: *To start, could you all introduce yourselves, and your relationship with both Eclipse Phase and the world of pen-and-paper gaming in general?*

Brian: I'm Brian Cross, one of the three co-owners of Posthuman Studios along with Rob and Adam Jury. We're primarily known for Eclipse Phase, although we have a number of other projects that will be coming soon. I am also, along with Rob, the co-creator of Eclipse Phase and remain involved in its development. I've been gaming since I first learned how to play D&D [Dungeons & Dragons] at a sleepover when I was 9, so over 20 years now, but didn't really get involved in the production side until I met Rob. He was good enough, or desperate enough, to hire me to edit some stuff for Shadowrun. And I guess I did well enough since ten years down the line I still get paying work in the industry.

Rob: I'm Rob Boyle, I've been working in the pen-and-paper industry for over a decade. I've worked for several game companies—FASA, FanPro, Catalyst Game Labs—and freelanced on a number of games over the years, though the bulk of my work has been on the Shadowrun cyberpunk-fantasy RPG. Brian and I shared an interest in transhumanism and politics and so we collaborated to create Eclipse Phase. We founded Posthuman Studios with Adam so we could have creative control over our own projects, work together collectively, and push ahead with new models of publishing.

Graceless: *I actually have a ton of questions for you guys, because your work is so fascinating to me. I grew up playing Shadowrun, and I think that early cyberpunk influence had a huge effect on me. How did you get involved with working on the later versions of Shadowrun?*

Brian: I guess the initial involvement I had with Shadowrun was a long campaign I played in during high school that really sparked my interest in cyberpunk. And then, as I mentioned, meeting Rob, in a goth club in Chicago and finding out that he was the line developer for Shadowrun at the time and getting a chance to do some work there. And then when the discussions for fourth edition came around I was fortunately enough to be involved in those discussions from the very beginning and have a chance to contribute to the newest iteration of the game world I loved.

Rob: I played a lot of the FASA games like Shadowrun, BattleTech, Earthdawn, etc. when I was younger. FASA was located in Chicago, where I lived, and they happened to advertise





for an editor position, so I jumped at it. I didn't actually have any professional editorial experience at the time, so I promoted my background working on (mostly anarchist) zines in the early 90s. Luckily, I think the chief editor was looking for people who were a bit outside the box. She had me take a bunch of tests and then I got the job. My affinity for Shadowrun came out pretty quick, so after about a year they moved me from editorial to assistant line developer. When FASA shut down in 2001, FanPro acquired the Shadowrun license and hired me be lead dev. After a few years, I put together a team to upgrade the setting and rules system to its current incarnation, Shadowrun, Fourth Edition.

Graceless: *Tell me about your new game, Eclipse Phase.*

Brian: We like to call Eclipse Phase a game of post-apocalyptic transhumanist conspiracy and horror, which can be a mouthful but really does hit all the main themes in the game. Basically the game takes place in a solar system in our future where things have gone very very wrong and even though people have the ability to use technology to keep themselves alive and healthy forever there is a lot of doubt whether we, as a species, will survive for much longer. And the characters' role is that of existential threat investigators where they're the ones who get sent in to find out if they can stop the next big disaster from killing too many people. It's a very bleak world on one hand, but also a hopeful one on the other where we have the technology and the know how to do amazing things, if we can just fight off the things, including ourselves, that want to see us wiped out forever.

Transhumanism is the idea that we should be free to enhance our own bodies and minds to improve our capabilities and quality of life.

Rob: One of the main components of the setting is that people can digitally emulate their minds, upload into a computer to back themselves up, and also download into new bodies. So everyone is effectively immortal (with some drawbacks) and bodies are customizable. Another big element is that nanofabrication technology exists, so you can build things from the molecular level up if you have a blueprint. This has led to some serious socio-economic splits. You have some factions in which this tech is freely available, everyone has what they need, and the society is effectively post-scarcity and reputation networks have a large impact. Then you have others where the tech is restricted and more traditional capitalist social models thrive, where you have major discrepancies between the rich and poor.

Graceless: *How has the industry, and the public, responded to something as politically-charged as EP?*

Brian: I think we expected some degree of response to some of the content of EP but not in the way we got it. For instance a lot of the stuff we have in the game about anarchism has gone without much comment. My guess is that most people view that as fiction and don't get riled about it. But the tiny amount of text we have on religion, basically saying that a lot of traditional religions have declined and that Islam and Buddhism did the best because of what nationalities survived the Fall of Earth, well that got a lot of people pissed who felt like we were bashing Christianity and Judiasm. And I think we spent a fair amount of time when the game first released trying to address these concerns but at some point you realize that nothing you say is going to make a certain segment happy and they're just looking for something to get offended over. Another example would be a guy who got bothered by the fact that we make a reference to global warming, and we treat it as a fact and he was all bothered that we bought into the "propaganda" over global warming. For things like that, I think, you just shrug and move on. Most of the really political stuff, well that's not really come up yet. But I think that maybe some of the books we have coming may draw a bit more attention to that.

Rob: I don't feel like I've seen a strong response to EP's politics from within the industry—most of the commentary has focused on the setting detail and how that effects gameplay itself. From the public, I've definitely seen some comments that we wear our politics on our sleeves, which we're ok with. Aside from the responses Brian has noted, I've also seen some criticism that we painted the Jovian faction, who are a mix of neo-con and bioconservative ideologies, as too black-and-white or stereotypically fascist I guess. I've also seen some comments from people who thought our depiction of the autonomist/anarchist factions—specifically, how they could counter military threats from other groups—to be unrealistic. I think partly we run into the issue where anarchist organization seems like such an alien or even oxymoronic concept to the standard reader that they don't quite grok it. That's something we plan to delve into more and address in future books. On the other hand, there are clearly some fans who like the political issues we explore in the game and appreciate the critical approach we take towards how technology can be used in both liberatory and exploitive manners. We've also gotten some props for how we handle issues of gender identity and sexuality in the game.

Graceless: *I'm guessing you're referring to how the transhumanist element allows for a more fluid understanding of gender than what most games incorporate? Can you tell me about this, about transhumanism (and/or Eclipse Phase's) relationship to sex and gender? And if it isn't too crazy of a topic to cover, can you explain briefly to our readers what transhumanism is?*



Rob: It goes hand-in-hand with the resleeving, the changing of bodies, that is common in the setting. You can be male, female, neuter, hermaphrodite, or have a body capable of switching sex at will. Every player in the game has the option of sleeving their character in a body with a sex that is different from their gender identity, so players can explore that transgendered experience. This is an accepted part of the setting, and so we make an effort to distinguish how this affects daily life, from personal perspectives and gender roles to identity politics and issues of sex and sexuality. We feature characters who have adopted non-binary gender norms and alternative forms of sexuality, for instance. We even address this in the language we use, employing the "singular they" rule instead of gendered pronouns and referring to a character by their personal gender identity rather than the sex of the body they happen to be in.

Transhumanism is the idea that we should be free to enhance our own bodies and minds to improve our capabilities and quality of life. In a sense, we are all transhuman already, because we all use tools and take advantage of things like medicine, eyeglasses, birth control, etc. to live longer, happier lives. As a sci-fi genre, however, transhumanism is really about exploring the impact of new technologies that we are just starting to realize and have access to, whether that be genetic modifications, neural enhancements, life extension, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and so on. Some of these technologies are real game-changers and they are going to be incredibly disruptive to society, to capitalism itself, hopefully in positive ways, but also just as easily in negative. That's where our main interest in exploring transhumanism lies, in tackling issues like who has access to these developments, how do they make our lives better, how can we avoid them being used destructively or as tools of control.

Brian: As Rob noted a lot of this is about the freedom to explore these gender dynamics within the context of the game. I'm still always a bit surprised to read discussions among role players about their discomfort with playing an opposite-gendered character. It seems like at the gaming table it's perfectly ok to be a magic-using, fire-breathing dragon dude but only if you're a guy in real life, and vice-versa female characters should be played by female players or there's something "wrong." I think a lot of it comes down to most games allowing for a kind of escapism, but it still has to fall within accepted norms of "safe" with safe being no transgressing of major social norms. I mean you could play a D&D game with gender-bending social revolutionaries that seek to challenge the social norms but most groups are content using their imaginations to just kill monsters and take their loot. There's nothing in the rules for most games that forbid playing it the other way but it just seldom seems to come up. One of the things we wanted to do with Eclipse Phase was not only encourage this kind of subversive play with gender and other social norms but actually support it with the rules and in the way we talk to people about the game.

As for a brief view on transhumanism I think it broadly refers to the idea of using technology to alter ourselves. In a lot of



ways people have already started down the path of transhumanism, at least with cosmetic body modification, but the transhumanism of Eclipse Phase amps that up several notches by assuming you can tailor your genes to do all sorts of things that we require special gear to do now like breathe underwater, or live in free fall for long periods of time, or switch sex at a whim.

Graceless: *It seems like no matter what you publish or produce, there are people waiting to tear you down. How do you all deal with it? And what was the story with the planned fascist boycott of Eclipse Phase?*

Brian: I'll let Rob handle this one since he was more centrally involved in this. But in general I think that if you put out a good product that captures people's imaginations a few people with personal axes to grind won't have too much of an effect.

Rob: In this industry, you quickly learn to have a thick skin and to avoid feeding the trolls. It's a shame that sort of negative behavior from a minority tends to be a big part of the public face of the pen-and-paper community, because it's alienating and self-defeating. Fortunately there are a lot of smart and critical pen-and-paper gamers that balance it out, are critical towards patriarchal attitudes, and are cool and interesting because they're more into exploring fantastic and imaginative stuff than on being the gatekeepers for anything that's cool or interesting.

The fascist boycott you mention was a minor thing really. Back before EP, when I was the lead dev for Shadowrun, I was "outed" by some fascists because of the political work I had done with Anti-Racist Action, which included outing a number of neo-nazis to their local communities and countering their organizing efforts. Even though I used a pseudonym when engaging in activist work (a necessity for antifa [anti-fascist] work, really) and kept my political and professional activities apart, some of them found out who I was and where I worked and sent some letters and emails calling me a violent domestic terrorist and trying to get me fired. They called for a boycott of Shadowrun stuff too. It never went anywhere, it was a minor issue with no impact, and I don't think anyone in the pen-and-paper industry even noticed. It came up again a few years later when we were working on Eclipse Phase, raised by the same two or three fascists, though that time it was also picked up by a self-described conservative transhumanist who tried to use it for character assassination purposes in transhumanist circles (since I was organizing a local transhumanist group). It led to some lively debates and brought out some of the interesting political divisions that exist between transhumanists. Despite the usual bluster and death threats from the fascists, it went nowhere.

Graceless: *What are the challenges (or advantages) of working with an already established line, like Shadowrun, versus something entirely of your own creation like Eclipse Phase?*

Rob: The biggest difference was that Shadowrun had a lot of continuity, a lot of previously established characters, events,

etc, with which we had to maintain consistency. That may sound like a chore, but that was actually part of what made it fun, especially when you were tying old throw-away references in with new plot lines and figuring out how to weave it all together. It was very satisfying to take something you just made up, match it with something in a decades-old sourcebook, and have it snap nicely into place for the metaplot. Even when I was working on Shadowrun as a licensed property, we still effectively had full creative control, there was little interference from above, thankfully. With Eclipse Phase, it's more challenging and more intimidating. We have a big blank slate with the setting and the plots, so we're building it all from scratch; we can't just lazily inch along the same plotlines that have been going on for years, for example. It's harder and riskier, but more exciting. We're also still getting a feel for the interests of our (developing) fan base and hoping to steer things in directions they like. So even though we have visions and ideas, it's a lot more like navigating uncharted waters, or perhaps a better metaphor might be a lot more like playing the futurism game and trying to accurately predict how things will turn out.

Brian: Like Rob indicated there are benefits and drawbacks to working in a world entirely of your own creation. With Shadowrun you had this big, well-developed world with all of these little abandoned plot lines that you could pick up and weave into the bigger metaplot, but also you had to be very mindful of what had gone before and what everyone else was doing and get the line developer to sign off on it. With Eclipse Phase it's our baby and we're the ones considering what other people want to do with the world and some of the things are really creative and great but you have to consider, again, what we have in mind for the "big secrets" of the game and how we see things unfolding. Though I have to say I prefer the experience of Eclipse Phase to that of Shadowrun; I much more prefer the experience of creating and shaping a new world with places still underdeveloped to one where the changes are, by the nature of a property that's been around for twenty years now, incremental.

We published Eclipse Phase under a Creative Commons license, encouraged people to share the PDF with friends, and seeded the torrent ourselves, all to great success. Not only did we build up great good will with the fans, we're doing better with PDF sales than Shadowrun did and we're on our way to meeting that game's print numbers too.

Graceless: *You work in the pen-and-paper game field. How is that doing right now? I was pretty depressed to see fourth edition D&D pretty much adopt a tabletop World of Warcraft attitude, but how is the relationship between tabletop and video gaming at the moment?*

Rob: Since I started in this industry there's always been a lot of doom and gloom, some of it justified, but quite a bit just based on people's inability to adapt to changing times and figure out new models for doing things. It's a niche industry, print sales are down and unlikely to rise back to the levels they have, and retailers are few and struggling. It's an adapt or die moment, especially when it comes to the impact of digital. So on one hand we have Wizards of the Coast [publishers of Dungeons & Dragons] in a panic over piracy and halting all PDF sales of Dungeons & Dragons, which is just idiotic. They're losing sales, pissing off fans, and encouraging piracy, because all of those gamers who just got iPads in their stockings are going to want to

put game PDFs on them. Meanwhile, we started off publishing Eclipse Phase under a Creative Commons license, encouraged people to share the PDF with friends, and seeded the torrent ourselves, all to great success. Not only did we build up great goodwill with the fans, we're doing better with PDF sales than Shadowrun did and we're on our way to meeting that game's print numbers too.

I don't think pen-and-paper as a hobby will die out, but it will remain niche. For now it offers face-to-face social play in a way that video games don't and it allows players more versatility for world-building and character growth. The barrier to self-publishing also helps here; it doesn't take much to put together your own game and offer it up as a digital download or print-on-demand, so it draws the DIY types. Tabletop has been scrambling to find ways to keep/draw in the video gamers, so there's more in the way of virtual tabletops for online gaming and new transmedia efforts to increase exposure to new properties.

The relationship between tabletop and video is tricky, because both produce good ideas and interesting ways of doing things. You see some tabletop games converted into computer RPGs or MMORPGs, and vice versa, but the relationships are very one-sided because the two are so disproportionate. Tabletop has good ideas, but it can't compare to video when it comes to making money, so at best it's a place from which to come and mine ideas. I think this won't really change until we get to a point where video games evolve to a level where players have more control over them like they do with tabletop.

Brian: You know I see a lot of people decrying the state of the industry and making claims that it's in a tailspin or decline or unstoppable downhill slide but so often this is lacking anything aside form anecdotes. So I'm naturally skeptical about claims that tabletop gaming is dying a slow death. I think, certainly, some companies and properties are dying but often this isn't an issue of the industry but of mismanagement of a property or the sometimes lax business practices. I tend to take a rosier view, for instance Gencon, our biggest convention, had the highest attendance since the mid-nineties this past year and has generally been well attended. I think we're in something of a heyday for smaller press and independent gaming with technology making it easier than ever for creative people to bring their game to an audience. Even Wizards [of the Coast] seems to be getting more exposure with their products now appearing in Target and other retailers that haven't traditionally carried roleplaying products. I feel the argument that computer games are stealing our player base is a bit of a red herring. It is, to some extent, like comparing apples to oranges. Video games tend to be solo experiences on the average, one person with their computer playing a game. Even MMOs like Warcraft are a lot of people solo playing together in a shared virtual space. What tabletop games offer is that shared experience with other people. I know a lot of people that could care less what game is played, for them it's all about the people they're playing it with. Ultimately I think, as Rob stated, that it comes down to understanding and reaching out to your fan base while doing everything you can to increase that base. For us that means making our game available for free with the understanding that maybe only one in ten people who downloads the book actually buys it but that by making it available in the way we do we reach hundreds and perhaps thousands more than if we didn't do it. If we are in a decline in the industry it's not because people have stopped playing games—we're seeing more and more older gamers—or because people are putting down games to play video games, it's because we're not getting the word out, because we're not doing a good enough job exposing people to tabletop gaming and showing why it's fun.

Eclipse Phase can be found online at ECLIPSEPHASE.COM





Zines—do-it-yourself, independently produced publications which tend to have a relatively small number of copies in circulation (sometimes hundreds, but rarely thousands)—have existed in music-based and political subcultures since the 1970s as a way to connect to those we share commonalities with, to learn and to share. They serve as a way to get information out without the creative and monetary problems one can face while trying to work with mainstream, corporate publishing.

While still exquisitely common amongst punks and activists, the zine may have always been less common amongst the goths and now it has almost disappeared entirely from our hands. On a visit to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I learned about a dark music zine in that area. I was so excited that maybe I bothered its author a little too much about it.

Jordan Decay's The Burnt Library *is a glossy, computer-printed one-sheet dark music zine with a simple layout that doesn't waste any space. Separated neatly into small categories, the publication includes Jordan's original writing, reviews, and listings of shows scheduled for the next three months in Pittsburgh. New issues of* The Burnt Library *are distributed and offered for free in a growing number of subcultural hot-spots in the Pittsburgh area once every other month.*

Jordan has been writing zines since 2004, The Burnt Library *since 2008. He says he's inspired by dark subcultural and music zines of the past. His zine is proof that DIY dedication still exists in the goth scene.*

THE BURNT LIBRARY

Graceless: *What do you think is the importance of having a real-life printed zine over e-zines with reviews or event listings on the internet?*

Jordan Decay: In addition to me being a paper junkie, it just lasts longer. I can pick up a hundred-year-old book and read it just as the person that read it when it was new did. In a hundred years, we probably won't even be able to turn a Kindle on. I also think that it's vitally important to have these sorts of physical artifacts, signifiers, and signposts.

Graceless: *You have been making zines since 2004—have they always been free? Why do you choose to provide them for free?*

Jordan Decay: Yes, always. Because it's a small zine, I wouldn't feel right charging anything ("Here, buy my zine for 25 cents and a button.") That and since my focus is getting the word out about shows and local bands, I want there to be as few barriers as possible to someone picking it up.

Some musicians think that calling themselves goth limits their commercial potential. Which if you're concerned about commercial potential in a subculture, it's pretty much all over from the beginning for you.

Graceless: *The first zine you put out was called* Anger 13*, and then you started with* The Burnt Library *after that. Was there a difference between these zines or was there just a name change?*

Jordan Decay: The biggest difference was a break of a couple of months and going from coming out every month to every other month. I got a bit burned out sticking to that schedule, and it wasn't until reading Martin Atkins' *Tour Smart* and seeing him speak with such passion about music that I regained that creative spark. Writing that, it sounds cheesy, but it's true. While mostly it's just a name change, I like to think that *The Burnt Library* is a bit more sophisticated-looking.

Graceless: *Do you keep back issues and are they available?*

Jordan Decay: Yes, sort of. From time to time I raid the archives and put back issues out at my gigs (I also have a dark ambient/spoken word solo project.) From time to time I think about compiling a best-of full-format zine.

Graceless: *Have you ever written for any other zines or magazines that you want to tell us about?*

Jordan Decay: Not recently, but if one were to look way back, you could find my name in some old issues of *Industrial Nation*, *In Pittsburgh*, and *BUZZ*.

Graceless: *You seem to know a lot about dark music zines from the nineties. Can you tell us some of your favorites and if there are any still around from back then? Do you know of any now?*

Jordan Decay: I'll focus on Pittsburgh-based zines to start. My favorite of all time is *The Third Nail*. It was filled with a deep passion and creativity, and embraced a wide variety of darkness. Such effort went into the art and layout of every page. Long gone, but one of the creators has his own tattoo parlor, Black Cat Tattoos. He does great work, though admittedly I am biased. *Dark Heart* and *Incubus* were both written by one of the contributors of *The Third Nail*, and were similarly music-focused.

Another good one was *Post Modern Sluts*. They blended goth, punk, and feminism into a powerfully-written zine, capable of being both humorous and serious. Some of the people responsible went on to write the similar *Good Little Girls* zine.

Today, it's terribly hard to find print zines. Or even e-zines. Everything's a blog now. While they can be handy, I think they lack the artistry of a zine, electronic or print. I've stumbled across two print zines; both are quite excellent, and put my small effort to shame. *Kilter*, a sizable color zine, is a group effort from Chicago from a bunch of people involved in the goth community. *Musick Defends Itself* is a black and white zine out of Ottawa, Canada, done by a single fellow with a healthy regard for the more experimental side of industrial.

Graceless: *Do you think do-it-yourself ethics are important in the gothic/industrial scene?*

Jordan Decay: I wish more people saw it as important. I'm terrible with a needle and thread—hell, I'm lucky a patch I sew on, stays on, but sometimes I *do* make the effort. There's a growing trend of handcrafted work, as seen by Etsy.com. It's awesome seeing someone in a well-customized leather jacket or an article of clothing that is clearly not store-bought from the dreadful Hot Topic.

In a musical sense, I think there's also a movement away from everyone using the same musical programs, incorporating more hardware, more customized and homemade gear.

Graceless: *Working on* Graceless *as well as some other radical gothic projects, I have found myself encountering the problem of people or projects refusing to allow themselves to identify with the label "gothic." I read in another interview that you have been frustrated by the avoidance of using the term "gothic/industrial" to describe oneself. Any thoughts on why this happens? Can you think of any examples of how you've seen this divide the scene?*

Jordan Decay: I think that the main reason it happens is because some musicians think that calling themselves goth limits their commercial potential. Which if you're concerned about commercial potential in a subculture, well, then, it's pretty much all over from the beginning for you.

If I had to list examples, I'd say it's the difference between bands like Combichrist, VNV Nation, and The Birthday Massacre, compared with Manufactura, Slick Idiot, The Last Dance, and numerous amazing local bands, at least here in Pittsburgh. I think there's this huge divide between shows that pull in multiple hundreds, and shows that struggle to crack one hundred people. It's this line in the sand between casual fans and dedicated fans that have a greater depth of understanding and love for the goth/industrial community. I'm not going to say that it's bad to like the former bands, just that I wish more people did more than just dabble in what's an amazingly vibrant subculture.✳



JEEPERS CREEPERS!

The Dark Side of Victorian Children's Tales

The Victorians were the first to develop literature specifically for children—a hundred years before Harry Potter or *Twilight*. For generations, children grew up with stories like "The Red Shoes," "Sleeping Beauty," and "Bluebeard." These stories didn't educate, they didn't stress moral lessons, nor were they designed to increase self-esteem. But as the famous child-psychologist Bruno Bettleheim suggested, traditional fairy tales, with their tales of abandonment, witches, injuries, and death allowed children to grapple with their fears in remote, psychological terms.

It was Walt Disney who, believing traditional Victorian literature to be too dark for children, single-handedly set about removing the grotesque and gothic elements from the Victorian children's canon. Disney was so successful that most people today have no idea how disturbing these fairytales really were. Below is a short exploration of some of the disturbing themes, plot devices, and just plain morbid elements found in these children works. The Victorians' fascination with death and macabre is quite evident in these, some of the earliest representatives of bedtime stories.



In "The Red Shoes," by Hans Christian Anderson, a cursed pair of dancing slippers drives a young girl to madness and death.


In Charles Perrault's "Bluebeard," a young woman is forced to marry a man who has killed each of his dozen prior wives.
"La Barbe Bleue."

"The Red Shoes" by Hans Christian Anderson

This story first appeared in English in the best-selling book *Fairy Tales and Other Stories*, released in 1850. The story is about a young girl who manipulates her father into purchasing a pair of red dancing slippers. The slippers make her dance day and night in all types of weather. She can never stop to take them off and they even stop her from going to church. In desperation, she prays to God for help. An angel comes to her and tells her she will go to hell for being so vain and leaves. She pays an executioner to lop off her feet. He does so, buries the slipper-clad feet, and carves wooden replacements for the crippled girl. The shoes continue to harass her, tapping in front of her wherever she walks and even tapping on her roof, keeping her from sleeping until she finally dies. There have been many sanitized versions printed after the original one, as well as two films and an album by goth singer Kate Bush.

"Little Match Girl" by Hans Christian Anderson

This short tale was first published in 1845 and remained on the "official pedagogy" for British schools until 1908. At the time, it was Anderson's most famous tale in the English-speaking world. The story starts on a cold New Year's Eve as a poor girl tries to sell matches in the street but is rebuffed by the gentlemen. One man offers to buy a match if she will kiss him and "return to his hotel." She refuses. She is freezing, but she is afraid to go home because her father will beat her with a broom handle for not selling any matches, which he has done in the past. She takes shelter in a nook of a "dead house" and lights the matches to warm herself. In their glow, she sees several lovely visions, including a Christmas tree and a holiday feast. The girl looks skyward, sees a shooting star, and remembers her deceased granny saying that such a falling star means someone died and is going into Heaven. As she lights her next match, she sees a vision of her grandmother, the only person to have treated her with love and kindness. She strikes one match after another to keep the vision of her grandmother nearby for as long as she can. The child dies, freezing into a block of ice from the sleet. In the original (only published in Danish), Anderson adds an epilogue suggesting the frozen child was taken to adorn a banquet table of a rich man (maybe the first passerby, the one that asked for a kiss) for a party he is having.

"Bluebeard" by Charles Perrault

This is an old folktale, dating back at least to the 1600s, but it first became a children's staple in the 1860s. The story is about a Bluebeard, an aristocrat, who is feared and shunned because of his "frightfully ugly" blue beard. He had been married a dozen times, but no one knew what had become of his wives. He was therefore avoided by the local girls. When Bluebeard visits one of his neighbors and asks to marry one of her four daughters, the girls are terrified, and each tries to pass him on to the other. They eventually trick the youngest sister into going with him. In short order, she becomes wife number thirteen.

Bluebeard announces that he must leave the country for a while; he gives all the keys of the home to his new wife, including the key to one small room that she was forbidden to enter. She is haunted at night, having nightmares of heads of women rolling down the stairs and screaming out for her. After the third night of such terrible dreams, she decides to explore the home.The newlywed eventually discovers the room's horrible secret: its floors and walls are awash with blood, and the headless dead bodies of her husband's former wives hang from hooks on the walls. Horrified, she locks the door, but she'd gotten blood on the key and cannot wash it off. Bluebeard returns home unexpectedly and immediately

knows what his wife has done. In a blind rage, he threatens to behead her on the spot, but she implores that he give her quarter of an hour to say her prayers. She sends a message with a rat to her brothers who come in and save her just before Bluebeard breaks down the door to kill her. At least it has a happy ending.

"Cinderella"

There have many adaptations of this traditional folktale, by Anderson, Perrault, Melville, and many others. In 1882 there were at least a dozen children's books with some version of this story. The plot is known to almost everyone. What is less well-known for those that grew up with Disney are the darker parts of the story.

The introduction of the glass slipper ends up becoming a torture to both Cinderella and her step-sisters. The Prince comes up with an idea of pouring hot tar on the stairs to capture the slipper of the beauty that has enchanted him. The tar pulls the slippers off Cinderella's foot causing her to burn her feet so badly she cannot walk. The courier arrives at her home with one of the slippers for various eligible girls to try on. The step-sisters' feet are too big, so the step mother takes a shears and cuts the toes of each daughter to try to get them in the slippers. The glass reveals the deception.

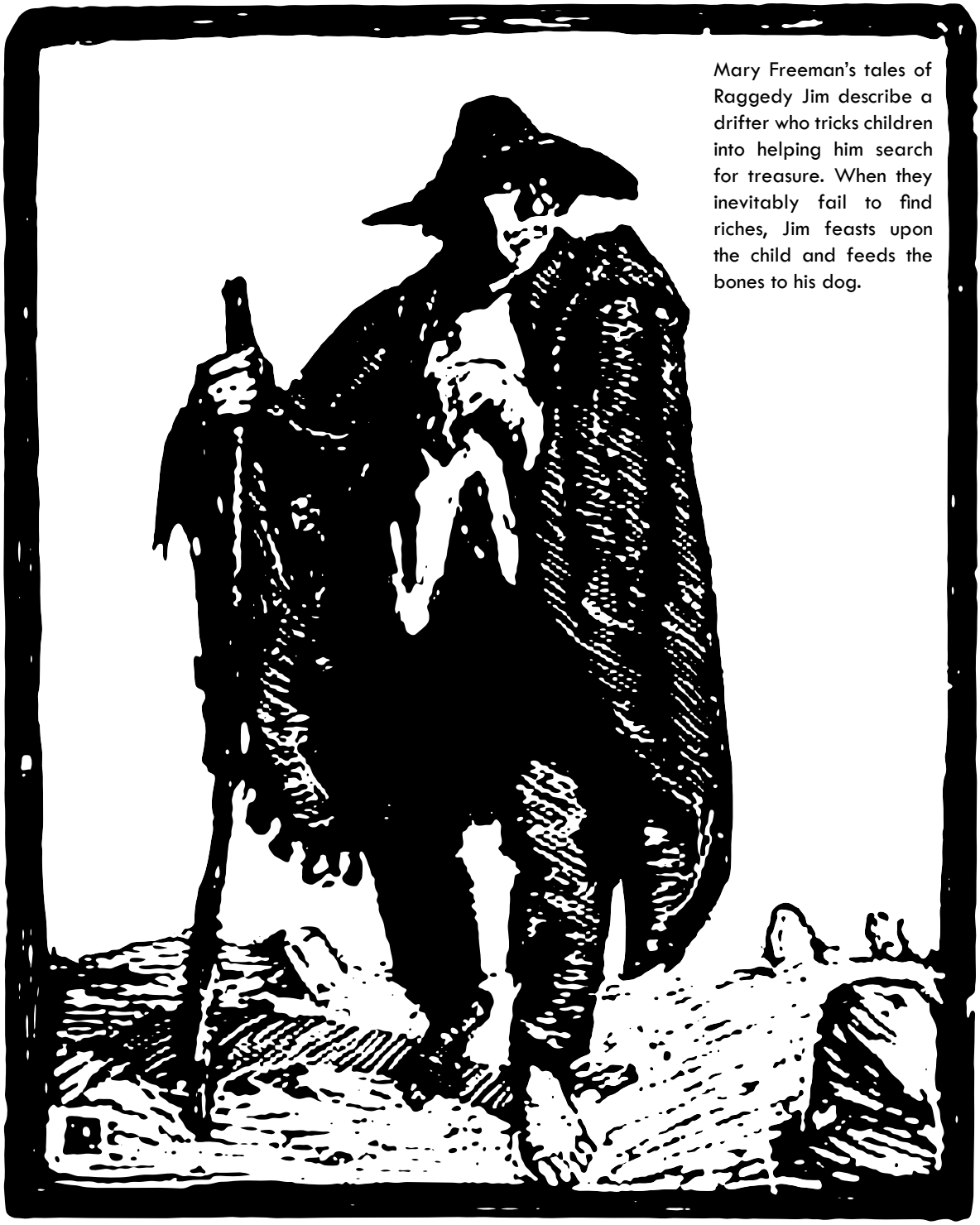
After a number of trials and tribulations, the Prince is reunited with his love. Cinderella is still miffed about her feet being burned by the tar and the other humiliations she had suffered, so she is not willing to wed the heart-sick prince. In desperation, he brings her a gift to sweeten the proposal, presenting Cinderella with the eyes and hair of her step-family. Cinderella fills their wedding pillow with the hair and keeps the eyes in a bowl. The step family are transformed into penniless, blind beggars asking for coins at Cinderella's wedding.

Raggedy Jim by Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman

Ms. Freeman was one of the first American Victorian children's authors to pen original stories of the macabre for young minds. Her stories usually appeared in children's magazines through the 1880s and 1890s. The character of Raggedy Jim appeared in a number of the stories.

Raggedy Jim was a character much like the wandering Jew. He was driven from town to town around New England. He had a companion, a one-eyed dog named Dreary, who accompanied him. Many of the stories involved Raggedy Jim tricking honest, and often poor, children into accompanying him on quest for riches, be it to find a pirate's hidden cache or to graverob gold teeth. The stories inevitably end up with Raggedy Jim failing to find his riches and resorting to feasting on the child and sharing the bones with Dreary.

This list could be expanded to cover the necrophilia found in Sleeping Beauty or the "chattering skulls" found in some of Kipling's children's stories. It is clear that on both sides of the Atlantic at the turn of the last century children were exposed to the gothic at a very early age. Luckily for us that tradition has not completely passed away. Contemporary authors like Edward Gorey, Roald Dahl, Maurice Sendak, Daniel Handler, and others keep this spirit alive. As long as there are children reading, there will be authors looking to unsettle their sleep.✳



Mary Freeman's tales of Raggedy Jim describe a drifter who tricks children into helping him search for treasure. When they inevitably fail to find riches, Jim feasts upon the child and feeds the bones to his dog.

we are crud goth.

maybe you will barely notice one of us at your punk house show, sitting in the corner reading morbid prose by the flicker of a dying headlamp. we may only be there because it's cold and we've nowhere else to go. we hang around ~~punx~~ for just long enough to be mysterious.

crud goth as a lifestyle.
we are travelers, we are homeless people, we are homebums, we are vagrants, we are train riders, hitchhikers, sign flyers, castaways, ~~stowaways~~ stowaways, orphans, derelicts. no one can hide from their demons by traveling; good thing we don't want to. we want to face them and embrace them; write about them and sing about them. of course we do -- we're goths. crud goths.

we try to sneak into skinny puppy shows and panhandle outside of vnv nation in hopes of raising enough money to pay the cover. we work the front door at 45 grave so we can see them for free and we press our ears to the side door at faith and the muse. we cook dinner for someone who works the venue for rasputina so they'll put us on the guest list and we fake a hand stamp for ego likeness.

we sleep outside, serenaded by urban rats and rural bats. we sit on the cold, urine-scented stone of cities we wish we could forget. the black nail polish we found in a freebox hides the filth under our fingernails -- not that we think we need to hide it, but black nail polish does look pretty nice. we are tattered and fancy.

our clothes are held together with dental floss, just like the punx', but our patches may look a little different. many punx and many gothz listen to music written by people who are disgusted with the world, but the music the gothz listen to can be ~~a~~ a little less straight-forward, a little harder to understand the meaning of. there are also some fascists who make both punk and goth music, but fuck them. they are not part of our scenes.

we want to influence the destruction of social hierarchy in goth scenes. well, all forms of hierarchy, really, but let's start with this. we want to appreciate and acknowledge without building pedestals and creating insecurities and arrogance.

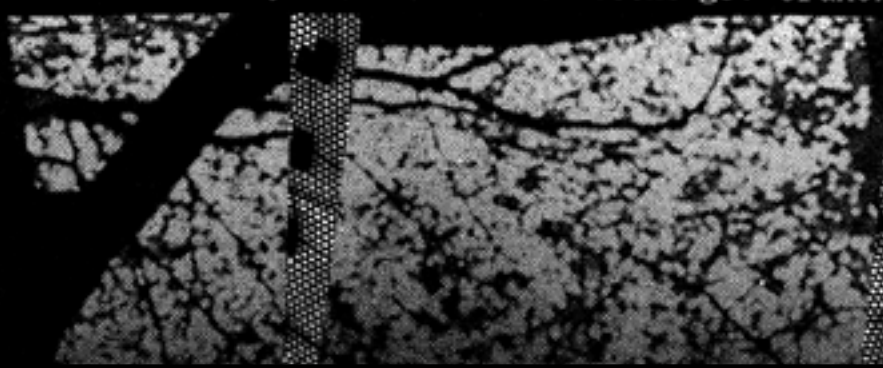
we ask the goths to look around them with a critical eye at the xxxxx system in which they barely survive. we choose to barely survive as far outside of that system as we can manage. we may skim the surface, working odd jobs here and there when we feel it's neccessary. we may hang on for hand outs when we feel we have no other option in this world. we're not always posi, but we won't give "woe" for an answer. we hope to one day watch the moon rise over the ruins that were once symbols of control.

we want to inspire the goths to explore their pleasures without money. we want to shake the foundation of contemporary goth. we don't want to feel bad for smellin' up the clubs, but we want to smell up the clubs. we want to incite do-it-yourself industrial generator shows on rooftops and darkwave in your basements. and we want to play at them, too.

crud goth as a music genre,
we most likely play typical instruments of the homeless, and we play on sidewalks all over the world for food and for money.

crud goths go on tour in vans we also sleep in, with counterfeit bus passes, with our backpacks and instruments and no solid plans, with no change of underwear for the next three months. crud goths play in your town because we were passing through, anyway, and we may as well.

crud goth is the spookiest music street people can make with what we've got. crud goth is music made by crud goths and our allies who consider the music they make to be crud goth. this is the music metal rusts to, the music spiders spin webs to, the music black hearts beat to, the music black socks get crunchy to.



xxx enola dismay



Maxmillian Schreck split his time between acting, including portraying Count Orlock in *Nosferatu*, and fighting right-wing thugs.

THE PAWN REVOLTS

german expressionist horror

by Johann Elser

"It was that day. The first day I was to direct. That I understood the Pawn Revolts. I did not become a director that day but I did become an artist because of that experience," Fritz Lang often recalled while living in Hollywood, in exile from Nazi Germany. The director of such masterpieces of *Metropolis* and *M* was reminiscing about driving through the Sparticist Uprising of Munich on January 5th, 1919. He had been late for his first day of directing and had taken a taxi on the morning of the armed uprising against the post-war Weimar Government. The streets had been teeming with workers, communists, anarchists, criminals, and the rage of the street throwing up barricades and fighting the police for a week. It's often believed that the uprising scene in Lang's masterpiece *Metropolis* was influenced by those bloody winter days in 1919.

And this was not the only political influence on German Expressionist horror genre that dominated European cinema in the 1920s and helped shape so much of what came since, from *Psycho* to *Blade Runner*.

The 1920 horror classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Kabinett des Doktor Caligari*) tells the haunting tale of how the deranged Dr. Caligari and his faithful sleepwalking Cesare are connected to a series of grisly and unexplained murders in a small German mountain village. The narrator, Francis, and his friend Alan visit a carnival in the village where they see Dr. Caligari and the somnambulist Cesare, whom the doctor is displaying as an attraction. Caligari brags that Cesare can answer any question he is asked. When Alan asks Cesare how long he has to live, Cesare tells Alan that he will die before dawn the next day—a prophecy which is fulfilled. Francis, along with his betrothed Jane, investigate Caligari and Cesare, which eventually results in Cesare kidnapping Jane. Caligari orders Cesare to kill Jane. After being confronted with the dread deed, Caligari reveals his mania and is imprisoned in an asylum. A twist ending reveals that Francis, Jane, and Cesare are all inmates of the insane asylum, and the man he says is Caligari is his asylum doctor. Despite this flimsy plot, the look of this film has made it one of the finest classics of horror.

This film was directed by Robert Wiene from a screenplay by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, all three radical pacifists and anti-militarists. Janowitz said the expressionist imagery used in the film came from his horrifying experiences as an infantryman during World War I. Wiene said the shocking use of light and shadow were an attempt to recapture the visual dread of a nighttime artillery bom-

bardment. Mayer spent time in a hospital for shell-shocked veterans after the war and drew upon these experiences to explore the fragility of the mind. It has been suggested Janowitz made his antagonists Italian after experiencing a fascist speech given by Mussolini. In a letter to his wife he said, "The power of that baboon [Mussolini] to control the masses with his predictions of blood, truly frightens me." All three, owing to their radical positions and Jewish heritage, later fled Germany as the Nazis rose to power. Unfortunately, a number of Wiene's expressionist horror films were never released and were banned, and then burned, by brownshirt zealots.

Fritz Lang's most famous film, 1927's *Metropolis*, is often cited as the premier example of cinematic German Expressionism. It is a horror movie that has often been compared to *Frankenstein,* but in fact it was based on the Alexei Tolstoy novel *Aelita* that chronicles a Bolshevik-style revolution on Mars. Lang disliked the Bolsheviks, pointing out that "[they're] just another uniform. I hate all uniforms," but he was fascinated by uprisings of the working people against their oppressors. As Fritz Lang explained in an interview with author Peter Bogdanovich, the politics of the movie may have been naïve, but they were sincerely felt by everyone working on the film. Even in 1927, cast and crew were often witness to violent clashes between Nazi brownshirts and various radical groups. "Everyone was talking about the future and I was afraid of their vision. So I made mine that reflected that fear." *Metropolis* is the first dystopian film ever made, and remains one of the finest. In 1932, the year before Adolf Hitler came to power, Lang's wife joined the Nazi party and Lang promptly divorced her. It became clear to him, that despite his popularity as a filmmaker, he was going to end up on a Gestapo list, so he fled to Hollywood. He took his film reels with him to avoid them being destroyed as "degenerate" art by the cultural fascists of the new Reich. Thus he preserved such classic expressionist horror/fantasy films as *Metropolis*, *M*, and *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*.

The 1922 film *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* is the best known example of German Expressionist cinema, at least among the goth-inclined. It tells the thinly disguised story of Count Dracula—F.W. Murnau, the film's creator, had changed some of the story's plot in an unsuccessful attempt to avoid a lawsuit by Bram Stoker's widow. Munrau went on to direct other expressionist horror films, like *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr Hyde* / *The Head of Janus* (1920), *The Haunted Castle* (1921), *The Phanxtom* (1922), *Faust* (1926), and *The Four Devils* (1928). Munrau, who was injured as an air force pilot in World War I, joined a number of radical pacifist groups and met Robert Weine (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) who some say introduced him to the ideas of expressionism of political artists Georg Grosch and Otto Dix. Like other Expressionist filmmakers he was also forced to flee the Nazis and resettle in Hollywood. Maxmillian Schreck, who played the iconic role of the vampire Count Orlock, was a bouncer for Bertold Brecht's theater company. Brecht, the famous author of *The Three-Penny Opera*, was a life-long Marxist and almost all of his plays were highly charged politically. Rightwing and religious groups sometimes tried to stop his performances by attacking the actors. Apparently Schreck split his time between acting and fighting off rightwing thugs. Schreck died of a heart attack in 1936, on the eve of the consolidation of Nazi power in Germany.

German Expressionism in film was marked by a politically radical and radically new approach to making movies. In the early expressionist films like *The Student of Prague*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), *The Golem* (1920), *Destiny* (1921), *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Phantom* (1922), *Schatten* (1923), and *The Last Laugh* (1924), this style was exemplified by using symbolism and *mise-en-scène* to add mood and deeper meaning to a movie, concentrating on the dark fringes of human experience. Film scholar Lotte Eisner's *The Haunted Screen* and Sigfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* provide invaluable scholarship regarding the political roots of this influential cinematic period. Kracauer argues German cinema from the Expressionist era was deeply influenced and informed by the radical politics of the time and the films hint at the inevitability of Nazi Germany. For Eisner, German Expressionist cinema is a visual manifestation of Romantic ideals and an understanding of human society that is deeply at odds with the Nazi worldview. Both authors suggest that disgust with the current political situation of Weimar Germany created a situation where creative and political artists sought expression in the new and popular medium of film. This expressionist view did not die in the Reich, but escaped to America where it saw a second life. Two genres that were especially influenced by Expressionism are Hollywood horror film and film noir. Carl Laemmle of Universal Studios, who had made a name for himself by producing such famous horror films of the silent era as Lon Chaney's *The Phantom of the Opera,* immediately seized on the exiled radical German filmmakers such as Karl Freund (the cinematographer for *Dracula* in 1931), setting the style and mood of the Universal monster movies of the 1930s with their dark and artistically designed sets, providing a model for later generations of horror films.✳

Ten Expressionist Horror Masterpieces

Nosferatu (1922)

M (1931)

Metropolis (1927)

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)

The Golem (1920)

The Phantom (1922)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (1939)

Faust (1926)

Backstairs (1921)

Waxworks (1924)

AUFGEBAUT AUS EINGESTÜRZTEM*

an expatriate's guide to DIY goth in Germany

by Jenly

By the time I emigrated to Europe in 2006, I had fully burnt myself out on the goth scene as it were in the States. When I got started in the scene in the mid-nineties, I certainly felt more at ease with goths than I did with other people—but the genre has really undergone some massive changes since then. In the beginning I was attracted to the dark people who were conscious of the harshness of this world and who were actively retreating from it with all their might. By the end of my time in Boston, there were only a handful of these people left in the local scene there; as far as I could tell the rest were filling their apartments with plastic bats and velvet curtains from Pottery Barn and Target and wearing black eyeliner once a week at the night club, where the most frequent topic of conversation seemed to be the last episode of Buffy. We enjoy the passive consumption of fashion and entertainment. We drink, we dance, we screw, and on Monday morning we wipe off our make-up, remove the neon-colored extensions from our hair, and return compliantly to the regular world to earn some money in order to consume a bit more the following weekend.

I spent my first two months in Europe in Berlin, Germany, specifically in the neighborhood of Friedrichshain, which was at that time best described by a dear friend of mine as a bit like "a woman with a still-beautiful face but with her makeup fading away." Many of the buildings in the area had last been renovated and modernized decades earlier, which in the case of her flat meant creative plumbing and electric and coal-fired ovens for winter heat. The rent was low and the number of students and artists and unemployed young people was high.

We arrived on a weekend, after the grocery stores were closed, so our host took us to a *Volksküche*, a "people's kitchen," for dinner. We entered the unmarked storefront to find a make-shift kitchen serving a sumptuous vegan meal, cafeteria style. After receiving our bowls—steaming with seitan and vegetable stew over couscous—we found a donation box instead of a cashier. Most people were tossing in a couple of one Euro coins. We did the same and asked our hostess how the place could manage to stay in business with such a model? And where was the health inspection department to demand a proper kitchen? She just laughed and explained that in fact it wasn't a business at all. The people running the *Volksküche* had simply found an available space, acquired food through wheeling and dealing or dumpstering, and started cooking. We learned that there were multiple *Volksküche* events happening throughout Berlin on any given night of the week and that a zine existed both online and in print with a calender to advise us where and when to find them. As best as I could tell, the local cops and the health department had better things to do than to harass punks and hippies who were sharing a meal. These events served not only as a way to get a cheap hot meal, but also as a gathering point for artists and political activists. It was here that we met the Antifa (anti-fascists), the anti-gentrification groups (*Wir bleiben alle!*) ["We're all staying!"], the women's and transgendered support groups, and the squatters.

...and we noticed that we weren't the only ones in the room wearing black.

While we certainly took advantage of all of the commercial clubs and parties that the city offered in the next two months, we found

*building up from the collapsed



A book reading held during the monthly event "Dunkel Kunst" at the Kreuzmühle. Photo by Jenly.



Even the bathroom at the annual Romantic Dance Night of the Die-Blaue-Stunde is DIY and beautiful. Photo by Margaret Killjoy.

in short order that while the playlists were a bit different than what we were used to in the US, the attitudes at these venues were much the same as what we had left behind. So we were also delighted to find that there was a squatted house just around the corner from our flat which hosted Batcave parties on a semi-regular basis and that one of the nearby *Volksküche* events sometimes featured a darkwave DJ after the food was gone. One of the local clubs also featured a "Gothic Market" once a month on Sunday afternoons, which meant that the dance floor was turned into a sort of flea market for used clothing, books, CDs, and handcrafted items made by locals. The bar stayed open and some unseen hand was spinning dark ambient. These events were not strictly "black" events. The crowd was more mixed, fashion-wise and politically. Some people were clearly there strictly for the beer and the music, but we also met artists and musicians, people organizing political rallies in support of occupied houses and political prisoners and against war, genetically modified food, and human rights abuses.

After leaving gray Berlin for sunny Switzerland, it would be another two years before I would find this same sort of alternative community in the dark scene.

I spent Pfingsten [Pentecost] Weekend of 2008 wandering dejectedly from concert to concert at the 17th Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT), an annual gothic music festival in Leipzig, Germany. It was my third WGT, and even though I now knew quite a few people in Germany, I was personally going through a period of particular misanthropy and so this time I was feeling quite alone in a sea of 20,000 black clad friends. I went to a few concerts during the days alone and met up with friends at night to sit and sweat and sigh through long hours at the overcrowded Moritzbastei [a venue at the festival]. On Monday in the late afternoon, I made my way to the Clara Zetkin Park for the final concert of the festival at that venue: Christian Death. As always, the lawns surrounding the open air stage in the middle of the park were full of goths and locals seeing and being seen. Just before the entrance to the actual stage area, there was an enormous black picnic blanket covered with food and candles. A group of relaxed and smiling dark-clad people were lounging about, some engaged in animated conversations, other simply curled up together like sleepy kittens in the fading sun. There was a sign handwritten in script announcing that the group "*Die Blaue Stunde*" ["The Blue Hour"] was responsible and welcoming everyone to partake in the picnic and inviting all to a private party to be held later in the evening at a house not far from where I was staying... the promised music: dark romantic, an evening for dreamers and seekers.

In those days, my spoken German was fairly pathetic, so even with this formal invitation to join the picnic, the idea of actually approaching these strangers and speaking with them was more than I could imagine. But the party sounded intriguing (it's always possible to make yourself invisible at a low-lit goth event) so I crouched down to make a photo of the sign so that I would remember the address of the party. As I stood up, one of the black-clad came to me and introduced himself. This turned out to be Frank Schmidt, one of the organizers of Die-Blaue-Stunde, who more than graciously bore my attempts to speak German. I quickly found myself in the midst of people who would, over time, become some of my nearest and dearest friends in Germany. I never did manage to tear myself away to go inside the arena for the concert. We stayed there on the picnic blanket till the light faded and then moved on to the promised house party.

> They host poetry readings in abandoned villas and acoustic concerts in ruined castles on mountain tops, which is pretty far removed from the nowadays typical goth experience of partying to heavy synth-beats and a laser light show at commercial venues.

The party took place in an old building which looked nearly uninhabitable from the outside, but a collection of tea lights on the stoop revealed the same sign from the picnic inviting guests to come inside. The party was entirely lit by candlelight. Most of the guests were gathered in a makeshift living room on the ground floor. A large buffet was spread, containing the ubiquitous donation box. The next room, which turned out to be a former butcher shop, had been draped in black and lit with hanging votive candles to provide a suitable dance-space. The music setting the mood was a mix of neo-classic, dark folk, and film scores. There was roaring fire pit in courtyard behind the building surrounded by more people. The sun was already creeping up when I eventually made my way home, but the house and the courtyard were still full. Over the course of the evening and in the next weeks as I lingered in Leipzig after the WGT, Frank explained the concept of Die-Blaue-Stunde and how it came to be:

> "I'd already been involved with the dark club scene for a long time... My summary after all that time can not be clearer: I was looking into a mirror of society! The mainstream even followed me here into the dark corners!
>
> A certain creativity, an initial spark, was actually once there, otherwise there would have been no new movement. How long ago was that? I do not know. But I do know that the deep, strong stream has become now with the time a flat, broad river, which distracts us from our inner side (mysticism, spirituality) toward the external and superficial (who is the boldest, the most extreme, the most stylish?)! Over-stimulation and anesthesia—until no more soulful spark remains. We drift further and further toward the edge: welcome to the



A family at the neo-victorian picnic in Leipzig. Photo by Margaret Killjoy.



Attending a gothic event in a public park, no permits necessary. Photo by Jenly.





1645-The Cave is a non-commercial gothic event thrown every year at Castle Leofels. Photos by Holger Karas.

age of decadence! And decadence is always the last, outermost progression of an era. A culture on the verge of collapse dissolved long ago from the inside.

So around the year 2000 it was time to start something new. Something which questions the usual concept. Die-Blaue-Stunde was born. Unusual meetings in unusual places. Kindred spirits meet one another—everything else arises on its own. The spirit of the Romantics lives again! ... Find yourself rather than lose yourself. A break with the outside world of diversion and dissipation, a turn toward the inner world, toward treasures of the soul."

The first year in which I attended Die-Blaue-Stunde's annual Pfingsten Monday party (which coincides always with the final day of WGT), perhaps 50 guests mingled together through the night. This past spring, over 200 people were present at the high-point of the evening, filling the ground floor, stairwell, and the courtyard of the crumbling tenement house.

Through the semi-regular Blaue-Stunde events, I've met a number of remarkable people creating the scene that they want rather than the one offered to them commercially. The events organized by outsiders go far beyond house parties. They host poetry readings in abandoned villas and acoustic concerts in ruined castles on mountaintops, which is pretty far removed from the nowadays typical goth experience of partying to heavy synth-beats and a laser light show at commercial venues. There is the lovely and talented Vionna Iglems of Belgium, who organizes parties and art events ranging from a Victorian-themed picnic in a city park in the middle of Leipzig, Germany, to a neo-romantic ball in a old gothic chapel in Kontich, Belgium. Deep in the Harz Mountains in Lower Saxony, Germany, you can find the lovingly restored Kreuzmühle, a building which has existed since at least 1787 at the site of a marble quarry dating back to the 14th century, where Remo Sorge and friends host the monthly *Dunkel Kunst* ["dark art"] and other special events. A high point on the alternative summer calender is 1645-The Cave, an event held yearly in the ruins of Castle Leofels in Southern Germany, which celebrated it's 20th anniversary this year.

Organizing events in such places is of course hard work, something akin to tilting against windmills when one considers not only the material costs, but also the labor involved, as well as the need to satisfy local officials who want to be certain that the parties will remain safe for attendees and that local residents will not be disturbed. The group XHPonozon, organizers of 1645-The Cave are often asked: Why do they do all of this? To which they answer:

> "For one simple reason, namely to give interested people a chance to celebrate far away from their normal daily life, in an incomparable environment and with music far from the mainstream. This intention has remained the same. The first commitment is always to the music and our fans, never to the profit."

Even the Wave-Gotik-Treffen—one of the largest festivals for dark music worldwide, with a head-count of around 20,000 official guests attending and nearly 200 concerts as well as readings, art exhibitions, and other cultural events over four days—had its beginnings as a privately organized event with six bands and 2,000 visitors, which aimed to be not just another music festival but rather a event which would allow people to come together and interact with one another. That original intent continues today as, in addition to the concerts, a number of groups and individuals put together special exhibits or smaller, more intimate gatherings which take place throughout the entire city. The Leipzig festival is still organized by a small group of actual humans with a personal interest in the scene in contrast to other comparably large events, which are for the most part organized by companies specializing in general event management. WGT has additionally distanced itself from other European "goth" festivals by steadfastly refusing to accept corporate sponsorship and the subtle but invasive control which inevitably occurs through such financial support.

While most of the above mentioned events do in fact require monetary support from their visitors, others manage to operate at a monetary cost of virtually zero by just doing it. Per Frank of Die-Blaue-Stunde:

> "Why does one need a bar, when the guests could also bring their own drinks? Why go to expenses if the guests could also bring a bit more: incense sticks, grave lanterns, candles, and food for a buffet, even their own seating? Why invite expensive bands, when enough creative people can be found within one's own circle of friends? Why remain dependent on costly sound technics when there are also acoustic instruments?"

As far as space requirements, some of these events are run in privately-owned homes, some in public parks, and occasionally one receives an invitation with a caution such as "please be careful on your way here not to draw the attention of anyone when crawling through the hole in the fence on the unmarked path." Because the overhead costs are low or nonexistent, there is no need to compromise on the program or the playlist and include pop songs or unwanted activities in order to bring the necessary crowd for a financially-successful commercial event.

What I personally cherish is that for the people I've met through these gatherings, the "scene" is about far more than music and fashion. Over the years I've had lovely discourses with them about spirituality, the esoteric, the environment, 19th century literature, and the apocalypse amongst other concerns—the same types of conversations I found early on in my journey through the dark scene, when it still remained a bit weird and dim, and by virtue of its slim popularity was forced to make due and organize itself in an intimate fashion. Of course creation and organization requires much more effort than passive consumption, but the end result of taking back our own scene is precious indeed.

On a hot Wednesday night in Baltimore, I crammed into the tiny living room of a nearly derelict punk house to see The Horror, The Horror play. I'd come down from NYC to conduct the interview and photograph the show, and I wasn't disappointed. They play a strange mix of music, sometimes a bit jarring, ranging from a gothic Belle & Sebastian to a twee-pop Velvet Underground. This is was their first tour for their first EP, Muscle Memory, *out from Edible Onion..*

THE HORROR, THE HORROR



Shaina and Ben in Baltimore, 2010

Graceless: *What is it like being a band between genres, playing to more than one audience? When we were talking before the interview, we talked briefly about how genres are kind of like genders, in that they're something worth being influenced by but not constricted to?*

Ben: I've always been attracted to music that transcends genres and makes you feel like you are entering said artist's personal "world." I really like when music is very colorful and uses sounds that you can tell are really personally appealing to the artist as opposed to fitting a specific genre.

Shaina: I've worked in the music departments of a couple different radio stations, and over the years I've become increasingly averse to genre as an approach to music that can really tell you anything about it. Genres seem more and more like marketing-demographic touchstones. At this point I feel the same way about gender as I do about genre: every person's gender is radically different from everyone else's, deeply shaped by their histories and their lens on the world. And I hope that people feel that way about The Horror, The Horror, that they wanna develop an immediate relationship with us outside of any prescribed audience categories. There's no way to prepare

someone, really, for the experience of hearing your band play live.

Shantron: The music we're playing is all basically rooted in rock and roll which is of course rooted in folk or blues music. Twee music, pop music, psychedelic music, goth music… it's all rooted in that, so messing around with the different genres or dialects that have formed from those roots just seems to make sense to me. I don't want to be held down by any genre, gender, or category. We're all rooted in some unknown multifarious big bang of being and chaotic matter and other sparkly, outrageous things and then some assholes go and map countries, governments, the binary gender system, and countless other crap onto all of that. The boundaries either don't actually materially exist, are being enforced on us, or are permeable; there's always going to be things and situations and people that are in between or outside, exploring around the maps or exploding those maps. Shifting in and out of categories and experimenting with the many layers anyone or anything can become is my nature, so it's reflected in my music.

We're all rooted in some unknown multifarious big bang of being and chaotic matter and other sparkly, outrageous things and then some assholes go and map countries, governments, the binary gender system, and countless other crap onto all of that.

Being in a band that's in between is similar to being a person in-between. It's a mixture of feeling really empowered—like I'm part of creating something fresh, radical, and heterogeneous to the norm, rooted in various rich musical histories—and of feeling nervous and like an outcast in a vulnerable way. I sometimes think we're too weird, mixing sounds that people may not know how to handle, saying things people don't want to hear. I want people to be confused when they listen to us, I want them to feel the conflict between the genres and the conflict between what I'm singing and the music that's backing it up.

This is one reason why we've used more of a pop song format on some of these songs. People get pop songs stuck in their heads easily and my lyrics are dark—about struggle and/or female or trans empowerment—so I like to imagine people walking around with these songs and words (as opposed to the female vocalist pop music being offered in the mainstream) stuck in their consciousness and not being able to hold back from singing them aloud.

I get a bit nervous before any of the shows we play, for different reasons depending on the crowd. If we're playing for a more dude-centered college-aged artist/musician crowd, I get nervous or feel vulnerable about some of the content of my lyrics and how people will respond to them, whether or not they'll take the emotions I'm conjuring into themselves at all and take me seriously. I'm up there singing about dealing with sexually manipulative and misogynist relationships and singing about my desire and my gender history. I blatantly dismantle patriarchal culture's prioritizing of the phallus and masculinity in one my songs. I definitely feel empowered singing about these things, but still find myself worrying about how it will be received. Playing for a more radical anarchist crowd I, not so surprisingly, get nervous about the same things and also about how the musical compositions will be received. I'll be thinking, "Oh we're not punk or folk punk or our music isn't what other people are playing in these scenes right now so people wont like this" or "Oh gosh, I'm singing about feminist struggle and self determination and I'm not necessarily male so I won't be listened to or able to affect current radical discourse."

In my opinion, real discussion and critical work around the topics I write about in these songs has fallen by the wayside in the radical circles I've been in recently and I think a lot of writing and music in the radical scene is still largely dominated by (non trans) male perspectives. I don't feel represented enough whether it be through music, writing, or other mediums within my radical community, let alone the overall larger community, so I'm choosing to represent myself and those like me and I'm doing it by singing and music—not only because it's just what I'm inclined to do and I like creating that way, but because I feel like my voice isn't or won't be heard any other way. So, of course I feel vulnerable in my position at times, putting myself in front of people and delving into these deep complex things through song, but I'm starting to feel more and more empowered the more I get up there and play and lay all this shit out there and get positive feedback from folks.

Graceless: *You're in the middle of a month-long DIY tour, playing house shows, bookshops, and "real" venues alike. What is that like?*

Ben: It's by no means easy, but the satisfaction that comes along with a really great show is amazing. We're part of a DIY collective/label called Edible Onion that does only handmade releases, so even before the tour we were dubbing all of our tapes, making boxes out of recycled paper, stamping the artwork, and gluing said tape boxes. I find that especially now with such an emphasis on music in the digital world, it's really important to stay grounded in the tangible world and our response to such an over-saturation of bands and media existing in the digital realm is to go on tour and present music to people in real time and focus on making album art that is really engaging and unique.

Shaina: It's a blast. We all lived in the same co-op house/showspace last year, and many of the folks who are putting us up or booking us on this tour met us through playing and

staying at Castle Distrakto. I like the house shows and the less "real" venues best, because I think they better facilitate the sort of relationship between performer and audience that I was talking about, a space of trust that transcends category.

Shantron: It's a lot of hard work going on a DIY tour, especially the planning part, but also just traveling with two other musicians for a month straight can be hard. Shows get canceled, you get lost, you lose things, traveling with stringed instruments in humid and changing weather can be frustrating, et cetera. It's been taking a lot of interpersonal work and open communication for the band not to self-implode while on tour. We're all learning to take it easy, realize things get worked out, and have fun.

Playing different places allows us to dip into and expose ourselves and share our music with many different types of people and subcultures and that's important, especially because this is our fist tour and first EP, we're feeling out what our audience could be or could become. It's been invigorating and affirming getting to meet, network, and converse with other radical musicians, artists, and creative people.

I've always seen goth as being very critical music and reflecting on a lot of dark subject matter without being necessarily negative. Seeing destruction as a natural part of life and seeing beauty in things that society deems often as horrifying or ugly.

We played an outdoor show in the dirt under a graffiti bridge in Atlanta on the beltline (abandoned transit tracks) inside of a big wigwam-like structure that was made out of burlap and bamboo by the local artist collective. It was very *Mad Max*-esque; it felt like what playing a show after the apocalypse may feel like. We were using a generator fueled with gasoline to power the electric instruments and I was aware of the ecological impact of playing electric and it created a paradoxical feeling but I was fantasizing like: "we're a radical artist collective in 2013 living under this bridge and this is our post-apocalyptic show space and we have some old generators and just came across a gallon of gasoline, which has become very sparse and very hard to come by, and we've decided to put it towards having a night of spontaneous electric loud music because we don't get to it very often and such and such..." I was thinking: this might be what it's going to be like when things all collapse, but wait things are collapsing *now*, so actually we *are* doing this, we're preparing for it, we're emerged in this, we're a vision from the future or what have you.

Graceless: *What drew you to darker or gothic culture? What about the idea of gothic as cultural criticism?*

Ben: I've been interested in dark/goth music for as long as I can remember. When I was in high school I was equally a fan of both goth/industrial and DIY punk music, so to me it was a natural progression to be in a DIY band that had a goth musical sensibility. I've always seen goth as being very critical music and reflecting on a lot of dark subject matter without being necessarily negative. Seeing destruction as a natural part of life and seeing beauty in things that society deems often as horrifying or ugly.

Shaina: I'm coming from a slightly different musical world than my bandmates: I started out as a fiddle player and a ballad-singer, always drawn to the darker elements of both, and the ways that especially ballads with their lyrical content—but all music played by the Irish under English occupation—were forms of resistance. I studied under a singer from Belfast named Roisin White. Ballads are full of subtexts and hidden meaning and secret histories, especially in terms of female experience. A lot of songs are about rape, covert abortions and infanticides, or power-reversals where an unexpected, seemingly innocuous figure turns the tables on her abductors or attackers. Bands like Throbbing Gristle, The Fall, and Carla Bozulich in Evangelista seem to pick up a lot of those threads, singing about the viscera of human confrontation but laying it bare instead of veiling it in metaphor. I appreciate both approaches.

Shantron: I've gone through depression and anxiety about being alive while growing up and those moments were very momentous in developing my overall perception of the world. For me, being depressed is a reaction to my surroundings or personal history, a reaction to the overabundance of information/non-information, to images and experiences I go through on a daily basis. It's crucial to go through that state, it develops critical thinking and involves questioning myself and my surroundings, which leads to a destructive/creative impulse, which then leads to transformation. I admire, revel in and feel dark feelings on a daily basis so I am naturally attracted to gothic subcultures. I don't come across all the time as a typical goth looking person in terms of my aesthetic and I don't identify as a goth per say but I am drawn to it and it is a big part of me. I think goth can simultaneously be a reflection and a repulse of the existing culture. It can be a reclaiming of the dark side for ourselves which has been co-opted and unconsensually manipulated into a violent imperialistic, solely destructive force in modern culture. Goth is about being critical of that culture and civilization, it's about destruction/creation, transformation and autonomy (on an individual as well as community level). In this way goth involves transforming our own bodies and for me that has mainly played out through my gender expression.

I remember clearly, as a four- or five-year old, the day that I realized what gender was and which gender was being prescribed onto me through society because of my body parts. I remember thinking that this gender, the female one, was what vulnerability felt like. Vulnerability was the deep rumbling thread of being running through me at all times, sometimes certain people or situations would exacerbate it and bring it out to the forefront, but regardless it was always there. I have always been an androgynous person. In early high school during my adolescence I was forced into being and presenting as female through the suggestions, pressures and demands directed at me from my parents, peers, society and media. I struggled with this enforced gender role for years and in my early twenties I finally started getting in touch with my own desires. With the help of DIY punk zines about gender and support from the genderqueer community, I started deconstructing gender and exploring it for myself. I explored and became male for two years and identified as trans-male. During that time I contemplated about and struggled with my body, and largely struggled with the perceptions tied to what my body means in our society. I wanted to get top surgery. I ended up not going through with it and have become more of a genderqueer or my own sort of masculine version of femininity these days, but that time period was essential for me and it's a huge part of who I am. I may become male again if that's what I'm desiring. To me thats what goth is about—being critical, reclaiming and realizing yourself and the kind of world you want to live in.

Graceless: *Your music seems as inspired by the Velvet Underground and Bauhaus as even stuff like Belle & Sebastian and American folk music. What influences do you all bring to the band?*

Ben: Some of my all time favorite bands are Swans, Throbbing Gristle, Einstürzende Neubauten, and Joy Division and the reason they appealed to me is they represented the the degeneration of the industrialized world. I grew up in Philly so I saw this decaying city and to me this music was that environment sonically. The older I get, it becomes harder to classify the music I like. I tend to be interested in music that focuses on subject matter that is often marginalized and utilized music as a means of defiance.

Shaina: Definitely got into Belle & Sebastian and the Velvet Underground because there were violin/viola parts in their songs that I could learn, but my biggest influences as a fiddler for The Horror, The Horror are the Raincoats and the Vaselines. A band out of Athens called the New Sound of Numbers is doing a melody/counter-melody thing that has also inspired some parts I've written. A lot of 1970s UK folk-rock, Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, the Watersons.

Shantron: I was sort of closeted as being someone who was into goth growing up—or I didn't have a name for it. I was raised listening to classical music, some of that music is pretty dark, like Beethoven for instance, and I was always attracted to the darker songs in my parents' collection of classic rock—some Beatles songs, Jethro Tull, that sort of thing. In middle school I was really intrigued by Marilyn Manson, Tool, and NIN but didn't really delve into that scene or music as much as I would have liked to. After high school I began my psychedelic music obsession which led me to delve deeper into Jefferson Airplane, Syd Barrett era Pink Floyd (which influenced Michael Gira of Swans), The 13th Floor Elevators, Love, the Velvet Underground, et cetera.

The Velvet Underground and Nico are musicians that I see as being on the verge of psychedelic rock and goth music and we are obviously influenced by them. I'm also super into Gary Numan, Depeche Mode, Bauhaus, and and more recently I've been getting into Swans. Everyone in the band is really into The Smiths, Belle & Sebastian, the Vaselines, and Broadcast, so that's where the twee and dream pop elements come from. I love mixing these genres and elements to make something that can be complex; music that can be dreamy and poppy but also has a constant creepy, wistful, and dark layer which sometimes bubbles or erupts over the surface.✳

The Horror, The Horror can be found online at
WWW.MYSPACE.COM/THEHORRORTHEHORRORUSA


Shantron in Baltimore, 2010

Gracless: *Tell us about some of the art projects (music and other) you have been doing over the past couple of years.*

Tedb0t: Earlier last year (2010) I graduated from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP), a kind of mad-scientist graduate program that worked essentially as a two-year technological art residency for me. During that time I mostly worked on interactive installation art and experimental music and musical instruments. One of these, the Neurohedron, is an electronic music sequencer in the form of a head-sized glowing dodecahedron. My thesis at ITP was a group of autonomous robots that emergently invent their own spoken language. But while working on all that stuff I continued to do a fairly steady stream of musical performances ranging from my "electrogaze" project ("current_working_directory") to ambient-breakcore ("Stan Breakhage") to a performance-art opera ("Vessel of Polis"). Most recently I'm working on a "drone symphony" with a close collaborator that will be titled "A 3-ton Place In Yr Heart."

Graceless: *What is it about goth that keeps you connected to the scene? What do you like? What annoys you? Where do you think it could go in the future?*

Tedb0t: I suppose what keeps me coming back to goth itself is a basic set of moods and attitudes—a foundation of the poetic dark and the Romantic (with capital R), a depressive malaise both genuine and theatrical, evocations of the enigmatic and invocations of the Sublime. All of that could never have anything to do with a scene and yet still exist. But sure enough—it does, here and there, bubbling up at times and dissipating at others. There's something undeniably magickal about seeing huge chunks of Leipzig swathed in black at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen, something thrilling at seeing one's own values and ideals in demonstration at new and terrifying scales. I suppose that is precisely the same reaction that underlies nationalism.

But at the club scale, at the household scale, we find simply community and affinity. And as time marches on and I draw closer to my own inexorable death, I find the question of continuity more pressing and more bizarre—is one to transmit her values to new generations, and if so, how? How are we to react to the equally inexorable evolution of a group's values? Do we hold some things fast and let others go?

In the end, I am an optimist—I believe that my core values of the Sublime, the Romantic, and the Enigmatic will always live somewhere, in someone—but that it is perhaps the role of such a believer to continue to manifest these ideas and ideals such that our children may learn and be inspired by them.

Graceless: *How would you describe your politics and how does it (if at all) inform what you do as an artist or how you do your art?*

Tedb0t: I've never been interested in specifically politically-motivated art, personally, but that's because I have a contentious view of art as purely and definitively functionless, something that absolutely cannot explain or be explained. That being said, anything can inform art; anything can give rise to the rich pool of associations and relationships that good art is built on, and there are few better sources of emotive vitriol than the politics of one's culture. I've always had this impetuous anarchist-child inside me that deeply distrusts and despises authority, and that nucleus affects much of my values and value-systems, from the theoretical (why I make anything at all) to the practical (why I'm a freelancer).

Graceless: *What do you think about the role technology plays in the goth scene. Specifically goth seems to be located in some pre-idustrial past that may come off as anti-tech?*

Tedb0t: I never really associated any role of technology particularly with goth, though upon reflection I can see various historical forces at work—film and video, industry and the industrial revolution, etc.. There is obviously at least one strong vein of pre-industrial yearning, what we used to call "High Goth," the black-lace veiled adoration of the Victorian and Baroque. I never thought of that as anti-technological, certainly not Luddite, but more simply as an impassioned longing for an impossible halcyon—a tradition as old as humanity itself, I'd wager.

Graceless: *You have dabbled in a variety of subcultures; steampunk, New York Brooklyn art scene, goth, nerd, etc. what is the attraction of subcultures to you? Do you think there is a difference between a scene, subculture, and counterculture?*

Tedb0t: Generally speaking, participation in a culture tends not to be by choice; it's something we fall into because of our surroundings. Whatever choices we do make stem from an individual's set of values and interests. The groups that I've participated in have been all due to the people I know and like who have opened up new groups and new associations. My grad school, for instance, opened up an insanely gigantic pool of resources and connections that I wouldn't otherwise have had and—more importantly—might have eschewed had I not been dunked into the deep-end.

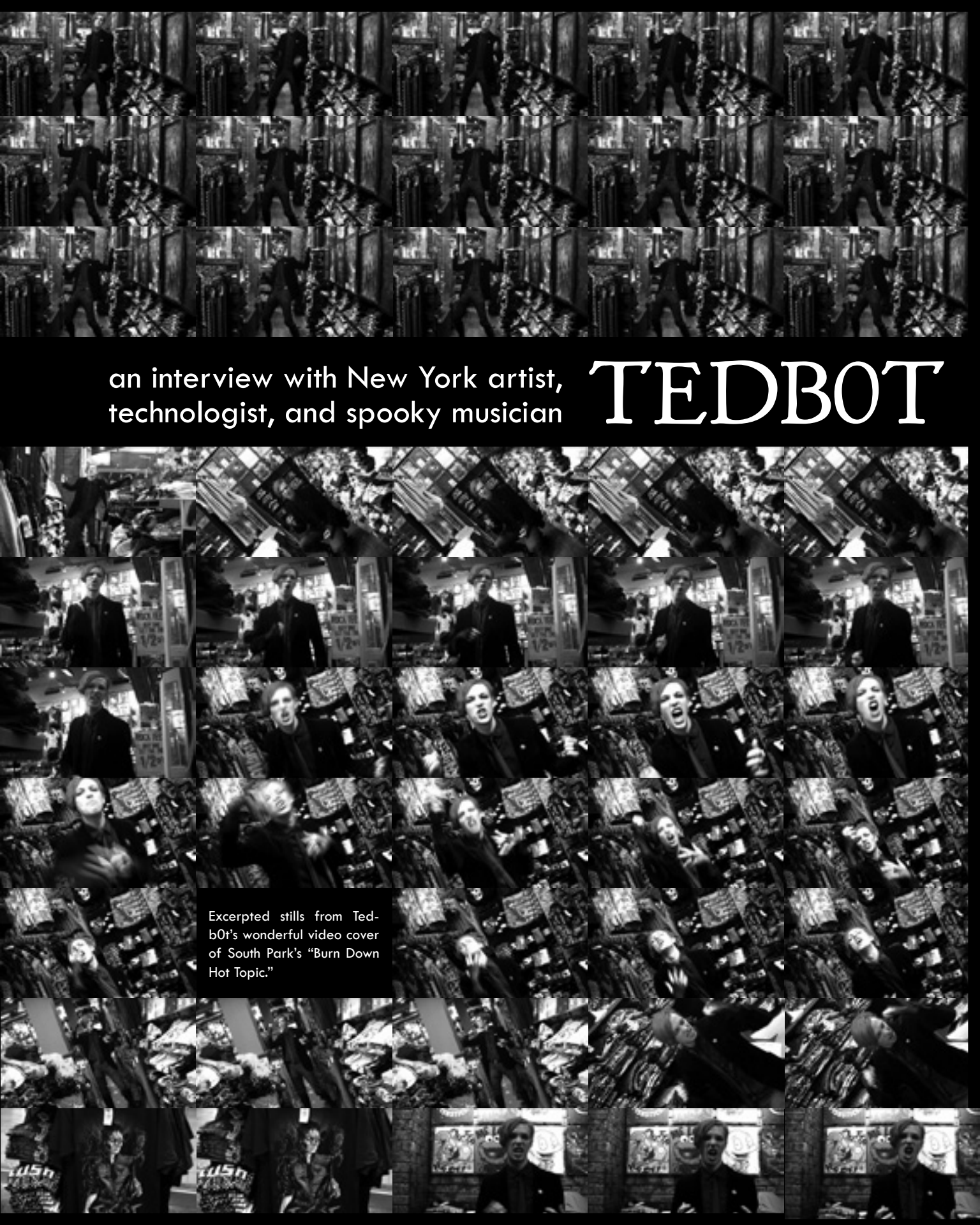
Graceless: *What are you going to be working on in the future?*

Tedb0t: I've got a (longish) list of projects I want to do. Most of these orbit around a couple of basic themes: language use and emergence, semiosis (the production and consumption of signs and how they work), recombinance (works that are structured, possibly recursively, through recombinations of its own structures) and musically, drones and ambient fields of sound.

Ted's work can be found online at TEDBOT.COM.

an interview with New York artist, technologist, and spooky musician

TEDB0T



Excerpted stills from Ted-b0t's wonderful video cover of South Park's "Burn Down Hot Topic."



your goth is dead

the rise and fall of goth in america

by Jenly

The American goth scene came to life in the early eighties as British bands such as Bauhaus and Siouxie & the Banshees reached American shores and combined with the American West Coast-based deathrock scene that had been building since the late seventies. At that time the US, like Western Europe, had been in the throes of a recession and the Cold War was whispering in our ears. The message was clear: *you have nothing to look forward to; there is no tomorrow*. While the preps and the Young Republicans soldiered on—with their Izod polo shirts, bubble-gum pop, and a wee bit of nose candy on the weekend—, a certain number of young people could not or would not feign hope.

The American goth scene remained relatively small and extreme for some time: extreme haircuts, extreme use of stimulants, extreme aversion to (re)assimilation into mainstream society. Strong elements of sadomasochism and occultism kept the number of tourists in club land to a minimum. The music kept a low bass rhythm and minor key melody. In this pre-internet era, we found our music on local university stations, on late night spots on MTV, or on mixtapes made by friends and passed hand to hand.

As the economy improved so did our mood, with or without our consent. Toward the end of the eighties, independent radio stations and recording labels and record/CD shops across the country were caught in the net of conglomerate media holdings such as Sony, Viacom, and Rubert Murdoch's News Corp. It was the beginning of the end of alternative music culture, as commercial interest now dictated the playlists. If a band wasn't signed with a major record label, they simply couldn't get airtime. Without access to the music of others or an outlet for the music they themselves produced, younger newcomers were becoming a scarcity.

The gothic people who had survived the eighties, the ones who hadn't wound up in a casket or a suit, took the party underground. Concerts and club nights moved to smaller venues and mid-week dates. Younger people just coming into the scene tended to be introspective and wistful, rather than the self destructive libertines of the prior decade. We were sure that something was wrong with the world but we couldn't say exactly what it was.

In 1994, Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails) released his breakthrough album, *The Downward Spiral*, followed closely by Marilyn Manson's *Portrait of An American Family*. Both albums made the charts and scandalized parents across the country. The visuals used by these bands appealed to some in the gothic scene, but many American goths simply turned their noses up at these bands as "over-produced" and "too commercial."

But once again, the dark side had the attention of America's youth.

Anne Rice's 1976 novel *Interview with a Vampire* and James O Barr's 1989 comic book *The Crow*, long-time required reading for the gothic set, were made into popular films in 1994, further stoking interest in the gothic scene. Tim Burton's 1993 release *Nightmare Before Christmas*, with its spooks and psychedelic goblins, provided an antidote to traditionally sticky sweet holiday films and became a cult classic which has churned out branded toys and clothing. *The*

Simply advertising as "goth" night was not enough so every week came with a new theme. Now we were encouraged to costume ourselves as Gothic Pirates, Gothic Space Invaders, or Gothic Barbie Dolls. The final straw for the many of the last survivors in Boston was the 2003 inception of "Goths Gone Wild" theme nights at weekly local event Ceremony, complete with Gothic Jello Wrestling.

Craft, released in 1996, further played out occult themes and gothic stereotypes.

Many US bands who had formed during the lull of the late eighties and early nineties saw their first successful albums during this time: Faith & the Muse with *Elyria* in 1994, Switchblade Symphony with *Serpentine Gallery* in 1995 and the Crüxshadows with *Telemetry of a Fallen Angel* in 1996. The nineties also saw some of our favorite bands that were still going strong from the eighties assimilated by major labels. The results from these unions were not necessarily what the bands, or the fans, had wanted. These larger labels were much more controlling and expected the bands to produce music which would sell more records to mainstream audiences. The Sisters of Mercy notably refused to produce under the conditions set forth by mega-label Time-Warner and ended up in a dispute with the label which effectively ended their recording career.

At the same time, the rave scene in America was thriving. For one night, we could be something else, somewhere else: fairy wings and ecstasy and a never-ending bass-line. There was some crossover between the scenes. Both were carried in their infancy by creative people who were resisting the call of mainstream society and heading for the dance-floor. Although the rave culture of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect) was far from the gothic tendencies of isolation and angst, the rave scene absorbed some goths into its numbers who appreciated not only the tolerant atmosphere but also the music and the fact that, unlike commercial venues which must abide by local laws, the raves kept the party going until well after dawn.

The connection had been made. The end of the nineties saw an electronic revolution in the American goth scene. Even as the music in goth clubs was moving away from guitar-based rock toward electronic-influenced acts from Europe such as Front 242, Nitzer Ebb, KMFDM, and VNV Nation, the lyrics of inevitable doom for both love and life remained. We still had no hope for tomorrow.

With the increased population at clubs, many gothic dance nights moved back to weekend slots and offered two dance-floors: one trad goth, one EBM/Industrial. And the clubs produced more than danceable DJ sets: poetry readings, skits, and dance troupes provided additional entertainment as well as an outlet for the creativity within the scene. Local fashion designers, artists, and bands organized events held on club nights.

The increasing availability of the internet allowed us to connect to each other across our massive country. The first Convergence was held in June 23-24, 1995 in Chicago, Illinois. Convergence was a national face-to-face gathering of so called "Netgoths," people active on the alt.gothic and alt.gothic.fashion online newsgroups. Convergence was a success and has been repeated yearly, becoming the most important and largest American gothic festival, even though its numbers (400-1500 guests annually) pale in comparison to European festivals. The sheer size of the US is a major limiting factor in organizing such events, and the cost of travel alone prohibits large numbers of potential participants from attending. Hence the policy of Convergence to relocate to a different city each year, allowing more people to participate even if only when the event is held in their region.

By the late nineties the aesthetic marks of gothic subculture were popping up even in small towns across America: mopey girls in ragged black victorianesque dresses over combat boots, sullen boys in black trenchcoats and sunglasses.

Event organizers and club managers panicked at the thought of reduced numbers and pushed for a more open scene in order to avoid alienating too many potential newcomers as well as to try to steer clear of outsiders who might seek to shut down such events in the name of "protecting the children." The new message to be promoted: "We're the same as you we just wear black (sometimes)." The tempo of the playlists started creeping upward and included more and more mainstream acts.

On the morning of April 20, 1999, in Columbine, Colorado USA, Dylan Klebold (17) and Eric Harris (18) walked into their high school and murdered 13 of their classmates and teachers with a cache of guns and homemade bombs. By mid-afternoon, the 24-hour news channels had already made the pronouncement: the boys had been known as goths, part of the so called "Trench-coat Mafia," a local clique. The verdict without trial: gothic subculture was to blame for this horrendous act. The depressing music and black clothing, the literature of hopelessness and violence, the nihilism? All to blame.

In the following days and months, American goths were literally under attack. Across the country, people were verbally and physically assaulted for the simple crime of wearing black ("The Columbine Tragedy Countering the Hysteria" *Humanist*, July 1999, Barbara Dority). Gothic high school students were subject to investigation and disciplinary action including expulsion for their clothing or after-school interests ("Terror in Littleton: The Shunned, For Those Who Dress Differently, an Increase in Being Viewed as Abnormal" *New York Times*, May 1, 1999; "Not So Practical Magic, High School Expels Student for Casting a Sickening Spell" *Reuters*, Oklahoma City, October 28, 2000) Despite later investigations which revealed that Klebold and Harris in fact had no connection to gothic subculture and did not identify themselves as gothic, the stigma remained ("Inside the Columbine High investigation" *Salon*, September 23, 1999, Dave Cullen).

The American goth scene wasn't sure how to react. Scene stars such as Lisa Feur of Black Tape for a Blue Girl and Marilyn Manson were interviewed at length by the media, with Manson providing arguably the most coherent interview in Michael Moore's documentary *Bowling for Columbine*. When asked what he would have said to the young people of Columbine High School, Manson replied: "Not a word. I'd have listed to them. That's what nobody has been doing."

Many people gave up their all-black wardrobes in favor of a more acceptable mainstream style for varying reasons ranging from concern for personal safety to increasingly draconian school or work dress codes. It seemed like such a small step, but the psychological impact was greater than imagined. We questioned ourselves. Maybe it was all true and we were in fact bad people and ought to be hiding our true selves from the rest of the world. We made excuses for the outer trappings of our inner interests.

Event organizers and club managers panicked at the thought of reduced numbers and pushed for a more open scene in order to avoid alienating too many potential newcomers as well as to try to steer clear of outsiders who might seek to shut down such events in the name of "protecting the children." The new message to be promoted: "We're the same as you we just wear black (sometimes)." The tempo of the playlists started creeping upward and included more and more mainstream acts. The lyrics became more hope-filled, more Depeche Mode and less Die Form. Strict dress codes were reduced to simply "wear black" or done away with altogether. Fetishism replaced the S&M performances because it was simply edgy rather than disturbing. Displays or even discussions of occultism were increasingly frowned upon as offensive.

The gothic scene became extremely self-effacing at this time. Jhonen Vasquez's *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac* and Robert Tritthardt's *Writhe and Shine*, two of the most popular gothic genre comics of the era, spend much of their ink making fun of their gothic characters for, well, doing the things that gothic people do. Projekt Records's artist Voltaire's cabaret-style performances also featured satirical songs such as "Hello Cruel World," "The Vampire Club," and "Graveyard Picnic." Everything about gothic subculture was fair game to be ridiculed: writing poetry, spending time dressing up to go out, obsessing about the lyrics of our favorite music, or being critical of mainstream people who invaded the small worlds we'd created for ourselves.

Hot Topic stores were popping up at malls across America. Corporate-owned chain CD stores such as Newbury Comics (once upon a time a stand-alone shop) and Tower Records now featured gothic/industrial sections. It was hip and accessible. As the American goth scene grew, it became almost wholly consumer oriented. No need to dig through secondhand stores for prom dresses to cut apart and dye black. No need to create your own artwork and music and jewelry, just download it online or buy it from Spencer's Gifts.

The electronic influences of the nineties were becoming the most most dominant sounds in the clubs rather than simply a part. Rave fashion and culture took over and brought with it more colorful clothing, brighter lights, more dancing, and less concentration on the bitter topics that polite society would like to forget.

We found that many of the newcomers were simply following a trend without any care or concern for any greater philosophy. What had been a vibrant scene full of artists and dreamers was now nearly 100% consumerist. There were fewer performances by local musicians and artists; instead clubs offered film, video game, and record release parties sponsored by major labels. Themed nights became the norm rather than the exception. Simply advertising as "goth" night was not enough so every week came with a new theme. Now we were encouraged to costume ourselves as Gothic Pirates, Gothic Space Invaders, or Gothic Barbie Dolls. The final straw for the many of the last survivors in Boston was the 2003 inception of "Goths Gone Wild" theme nights at weekly local event Ceremony, complete with Gothic Jello Wrestling.

While it would be unfair to claim that there are no more goths left in the USA, the subculture itself has evolved to the point of being nearly unrecognizable, compared to what it was in the eighties and nineties. Maybe we were in fact a pack of misguided young people who were brattily refusing to grow up and deal with the world as it is. Perhaps goth really wasn't about anything, ever. Or maybe we just got swallowed up and assimilated, just as we'd always suspected we would be.✳

MARC17

I'm Marc17 and while I've been a photographer for more than twenty years, I've been a part if the punk rock, industrial, and goth scenes for longer than that. The creation of my punk rock/industrial zine back in 1990 really started my journey into photography: I was thinking about all the times I'd been in friend's rooms and seen pages ripped out of magazines and posted up on their walls of bands or other people. I figured that was what people really wanted so I bought a camera and started taking photos at local concerts and filled my zine with them. This led to me getting my first SLR and shooting for other magazines and papers.

Currently, I do all sorts of photography including concert, fashion, portrait, and whatever else gets an idea in my brain. I've also done photos for Unhallowed Metropolis, a role-playing game centered around the subjects of steampunk, Victorian clothing, zombies, and vampires.

Marc17's work can be found online at MARC17.DEVIANTART.COM.



Coil in Leipzig, 2004



AMF in Seattle, 2002



Attrition in Portland, 2009



Skinny Puppy in Portland, 2008



The Cramps in Oklahoma City, 1995



¡Tchkung! in Seattle, 2002



Rasputina in New Orleans, 2006



Nine Inch Nails in Oklahoma City, 1994

JARBOE



Jarboe performing at Hell Fest 09 in France. Photo is © Anthony Dubois.

Jarboe's remarkable voice has been a part of my life since I was a teenager. And I think that it's been the part that defines what darkness is. Whether through her work with her old band Swans or through the remarkable breadth of her solo releases, Jarboe is one of the most influential singers the gothic world will ever know.

I saw her perform in 2010 at the Wave-Gotik-Treffen (WGT) festival in Leipzig, Germany, and it was one of the most overwhelming experiences of my life. When she sang "Overthrown," I realized the power that the radical gothic can have.

Graceless: *So, to begin with, I want to say that I was absolutely stunned by your performance of the song "Overthrown" at the WGT this year.*

Jarboe: Thank you.

Graceless: *It seems like so many songs that address issues like the state of the earth simply don't address the emotional impact that it can have on us. Is there anything you can say about using music, particularly such dark music, to confront things of this nature?*

Jarboe: My album entitled *Mahakali* is about global consciousness and not my own personal moods or relationships as a woman. It explores natural disaster as one of those aspects. "Overthrown" is about the balance of the elements torn apart. Having said that, as I do have family history in New Orleans, hurricane Katrina was in my mind when I wrote the words and that is also why I contacted Phil Anselmo to do a version of it on the *Mahakali* album as he is from Louisiana and lives there today. I wanted to write about "change" and the upheaval inherent in that change. Global warming, war, natural and man made disaster and change. Thus, Mahakali—the goddess of time and change.

Graceless: *How different is it, writing about external problems instead of internal ones? And from a more practical view, do you think there is anything to be done?*

Jarboe: It is very different. As for love songs, I have written many many songs about relationships and I have said all I have to say on the subject. As for the global issues, I feel my role is to comment on what I observe. As for what can be done, that is the question we must all ask of ourselves and the people in power to make decisions that affect millions of people.

Graceless: *You consciously try to break down the barrier between the spectator and the spectacle, the audience and the performer. What leads you to that?*

Jarboe: I come from a performance art background and believe in making a true, honest live experience for the people in the room instead of merely a spectator one. To make something real and honest and intimate.

Graceless: *How have people responded to that? And moreover, how do* you *respond to it?*

Jarboe: People have told me they purge and gain energy. I act as a vessel. As one who channels. It changes in that you are completely I in that moment.

Graceless: *I've read that you had a hard time getting some of your album art printed, because of the imagery you chose?*

Jarboe: *Anhedoniac* is the name of the CD. It is my most personal and emotional album and is dedicated (on the image of a gravestone) to my ex-husband Michael Gira and all the former members of Swans. The original version—not the reissue version—had very graphic photographs by Richard Kern. The inside featured a close-up of my vagina and a rusty chastity belt with hooks. Thus the "j" logo hook. There was blood and torn flesh as well. Also the lyrics to "I'm A Killer" has lyrics such as "blessed are piss and shit. Come now anoint," and "I kiss your angry fist. I love your touch."

The first printer was offended as they were Christian. The second printer was offended as they were feminist. The "commercial" reissue version used different photos but the words are still there. I do still have some of the original version offered on my website. It is hand assembled.

Graceless: *It seems ironic for a feminist to turn down the printing. The word "anhedonia" means an inability to feel pleasure, right? It strikes me that the photos you then chose seem a fairly obvious and powerful feminist statement. I don't know, refusing to print it strikes me as the sort of reactionary, second-wave feminist bullshit we're supposed to be past.*

Jarboe: You are completely correct in your observations about that, yes. Anhedonic is an addiction to the inability to experience pleasure. I added "ac" to reference alcoholic and maniac.

Graceless: *Can I ask your opinion on the state of the music industry? I've read before that you certainly wouldn't mourn the major labels if they were to die?*

Jarboe: The music industry as it was once known is dead. The old guard is dead. An artist can join Tunecore, for example, and do it all themselves. You don't need a label to make music or make it available to other people.✳

Jarboe can be found online at WWW.THELIVINGJARBOE.COM

Flowers of Antimony is a project for which two occultists from differing backgrounds and philosophical views have agreed to correspond about various occult themes based on their own practices and experiences. Many occultists have used correspondence to sharpen their ideas such as Dr. John Dee, Aleister Crowley, Paracelsus, and St. Germaine. Flowers of Antimony is roughly modeled on the fictional The Screwtape Letters *by C.S. Lewis in which an older demon and a younger demon exchange a serious of letters.*

Hello Prof. Fether,

Chance seems to be repetitively directing me to write to you. Magpie has previously directed me to contact you, I think perhaps because he thought I had gone a little crazy and needed someone to speak with about all the trouble with houses burning down. Also, perhaps you know M— as well? Because he mentioned you a few nights ago; we were discussing the finances and logistics of constructing an island in international waters for the purposes of setting up an anarcho-pirate/hacker commune when I mentioned the idea of Prof. Fether's writings. Also, and perhaps it is merely my habit of seeking correspondences when none are present, but a very distant look came over M— when he began to speak of you. I suppose all this amounts to is that I feel it is high time we were introduced.

Regards,
isis

Greetings Isis,

First in way (or in lieu perhaps) of an introduction. We met, albeit briefly, in San Fran around the anarchist bookfair. We talked about the occult and rode in a strange van piloted by my dear friend evoltech. It was also International Pi day if I recall correctly. Though my more common moniker is S— I also go by Professor Fether and have written a number of works under that name…. So yes there are correspondences but not all correspondences as you know are equally profound or influence the subtle gravity of causation. Though I have published a number of fictional pieces under a slew of names, I find bios one type of fiction that is terribly difficult to write. Let me say that I am in my forties and work as a mental health social worker…. I live in a collective anarchist home called T— in NYC, that we bought about six years ago, with a menagerie of human and non-human animals ranging from neurotic parrots to a radical ex-marine. I should also point out that about a year ago our little home was raided by the Joint Terrorism Task Force and the FBI … so I assume this e-mail like all my mediums of communication except carrier pigeon is monitored ... just so you know. I have a couple of advanced degrees, traveled with Gypsies in Eastern Europe for three years, worked professionally as parapsychologist in NY for two years, and other savory and unsavory activities. That should be good enough so you know a bit about who or what I am ... for now.

Yours,
Prof. Fether

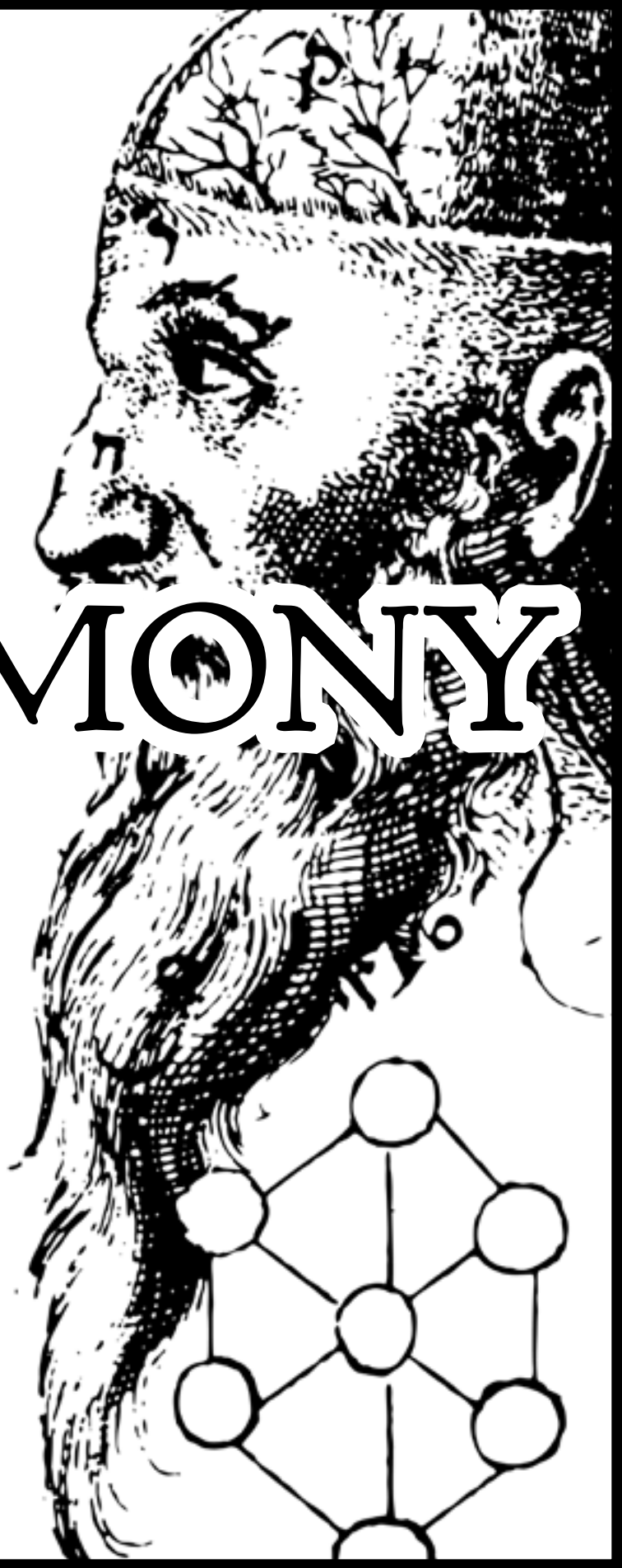
Fether,

Ah! Well, in that case we have met, and I was referring to you.… It is good to speak to you again.

Now for proper introductions on my part. I am Isis. I am in my early twenties and have been practicing magick officially

FLOWERS OF ANTIMONY

an exploration of Magick and the Occult



for about a decade, to an extent which has wavered back and forth from daily rituals to times where I have stomped my feet and insisted that I refuse to believe in such things. I have studied alchemy, herbalism, chaos magick, solomonian magick, sex magick, lucid dreaming and projection, neuro-linguistic programming, hypnosis, tarot, tasseology, qabalism, left hand pathworkings, and goetic magick. I have been part of a few orders and worked with many others, but the one I have studied and worked under most is A.'.A.'. I work with demons quite frequently and with much success. As far as official studies go, I am double-majoring in English Literature and Theoretical Physics. Like dear Magpie, I make most of my money at odd creative jobs and the rest busking in the streets. I lived in Portland for the past two years, but my house burned down, so I have taken this opportunity to look for home elsewhere. I am currently en route to New Orleans to meet a person who is rafting down the Mississippi River.

I'm terribly sorry about your home. Fire, at least, can be beautiful, but I doubt the Joint Terrorism Task Force could ever be.

I've written a few things about politics and the occult, here and there, among others. We can do something new or start with something old, either way sounds good to me.

isis

Greetings Isis,

Here are some off-the-cuff remarks on one of your articles. Overall I liked it, but I think it is more interesting if we look at where we may disagree…

I enjoyed your article My Chymical Wedding [available online] but felt you … failed to point out the dire inconsistency (or the "mad paradox" as Crowley called it) in magick. The rest of the article I found an exciting romp through the disciplines with gems of insight.

I expect you to roll your eyes at my naïve request for at least a bit of consistency, for it seems your article wants to have it both ways. You tell the story of how you almost got arrested and conclude with:

> "So [magickal influence] worked. And I see no need to question something that works. In all likelihood, the computer did not just poof! and lose files. Something else was happening. But whatever that something else was, it worked in accordance with my imagination, my will for the future, and so I enveloped it and made it my own, solve et coagula, mercurie and sulphur combined into the purest gold. So it doesn't matter what you believe, magickis make-believe, and in that lies its power."

I disagree, but fair enough you are stating a principle that is now quite common among practitioners (it is something we can discuss at a later time). However a few paragraphs earlier you say the key to everything is doubt, which you capitalize. You say this of magic:

> "This tool is called Doubt. There is no dogma, no grand theory and no overblown ego, that can stand up to this simple tool. With this tool you can avoid ever being taken advantage of by political or religious leaders, by advertisers or gurus: Each of us winds our own path through life, and there are no rules. Authority is an illusion, although hard work is not."

If magickis make-believe, then where is the doubt? Make-believe is the suspension of doubt—otherwise you have something akin to irony, which to me would seem antithetical to the practice of magic. To me there is precious little difference between what you are saying and the make-believe of religious fundamentalism. I have an aunt who believes that by praying she won't get a speeding ticket and she has many stories to support this angelic conspiracy in her illegal behavior. That being said, I do not see the freedom in that, or the doubt. I would also argue that many magicians (and a majority of historical practitioners) believed in doubt and conducted spiritual experiments to test the efficacy of their powers against the matrix of the world around them. They were full of dogma and in fact I can hardly think of a pre-20th century magical tract (including the few you mention) that is not dogmatic. To believe magickis without grand theories or overblown egos is to misrepresent the entire magical tradition.…

You go on to say: "Human existence is a mystery, and all experience is conditioned by relative context. Even the Magickis a philosophy. It is a way of looking at life. Even man's ideas of God are just that—ideas."

The same can be said of anything. Fundamentalism is an idea. What if my idea, say eugenics, says that all other ideas are invalid. It would still be an idea but I do not see how doubt or freedom (of myself or others) plays into that formulation. Doubt itself is just an idea, and it's one the Christians have spent centuries suggesting is in error when compared to Faith.

To me magick has always been about reality, accepting it on its own terms and looking for ways to hack it. Some theories fall flat when subjected to experimentation and feedback while others may show promise. Utilitarianism will only you get so far in both ethics and magick: "If it works it is good" is just another form of nihilism. If magick is faith-based then it is a religion with all the problems that go with it and if it is doubt-based it must deal with feedback systems to emerge. Tacking between the two doesn't give you the best of both worlds—it misses the salient points of both.

I liked your interpretation of will and found it fresh. However, I think it is an idiosyncratic understanding of the term. I think you have to address the issue of why so many writers and practitioners of magick slip so easily into totalitarianism. I believe it is their rejection of doubt and the perverse abstraction of magick/faith that allows these damaging beliefs to become so prevalent. I think the world is a good safety valve against egotism and the further we get away from nature and "reality," the greater danger there is for this type of fascistic thinking to be accepted. The New Age and Neo-Paganism movements from the 1970s to

the present have tried to avoid this dilemma by cherry-picking bits and pieces from various traditions while rejecting their darker foundations in their quest for a "feel-good" spiritual colonialism. This is completely different than syncretic traditions like voudoun that fold like into like. The 1980s and 1990s saw the New Age start to pick over quantum the same way they did other religions, combining sweat lodges with quarks. Now it is chaos theory and tomorrow it will be emergence. All of these traditions, the religious, magick, and scientific, worked with theories that developed out of reality testing. Reality testing is dependent on both theory and evaluative experimentation. Picking pieces here and there without bothering to test them seems more like a hobby than a philosophy. So does it matter if demons exist or not, yes it does. The same way it matters if GMOs give people cancer. The key is understanding the world, not retreating from it. We can only ignore the world to our and the planet's detriment.

Dear Fether,

…The inconsistency in magick to which you point stems, I believe, from a more chaotic approach to magick. That is, it stems from an inner conviction and an intellectual contemplation of the mathematics supporting the idea that the universe is not ruled by causality. The term "doubt" here was directed at the GMO(A)s mentioned above who are so ruled by ego and existence and tangible physical things, so bound by Malkuth, for lack of a better expression, that they can't even see past their own noses and neighborhoods. Their worldview can somehow reject centralized government, capitalism, and all other facets of external control, but cannot include any working knowledge of what it takes to undo the inner workings of control. This use of "doubt" was intended towards them, defined as an Ontology Inquisition for the purpose of always asking questions so that, hopefully, they eventually question the purportedly "natural" facets of personality and psychology which are actually programmed mechanisms of control by the very system they are trying to fight. This section of the essay that you refer to:

> "This tool is called Doubt. There is no dogma, no grand theory and no overblown ego, that can stand up to this simple tool. With this tool you can avoid ever being taken advantage of by political or religious leaders, by advertisers or gurus: Each of us winds our own path through life, and there are no rules. Authority is an illusion, although hard work is not."

is actually in blockquotes, attributed to James Curcio. My use of the term "doubt" can be confusing, I realize, possibly due to my conviction that belief is itself a tool towards ontological manipulation in a similar way to how language is also a tool for such. This is why it doesn't matter whether or not you believe in magick, because if you choose to believe and do not doubt that belief, it becomes useful. Magick certainly is not above Doubting. I don't think I know of a single practitioner who legitimately and fully believes in magick, or who does not perform some sort of scientific testing of their magickal abilities.

As far as magick being a method of reality hacking: Yes, this is precisely what it is. The trouble here is the term "reality." By reality do we mean the consensus-based physical world, or are we also to include the myriad other planes to which the magician is so often subject to? Without getting into any of the age-old philosophical arguments on the nature of ontology, I will state that this is where Doubt and the power of belief in an Idea come into play. Certainly, for my part, I believe that experimentations on any plane should be subject to a healthy dosage of doubt and scrutinized via the scientific method. But it is these other planes which are affected by shifts of consciousness in the individual. From a slightly more scientific perspective based on my studies in physics, I have put together a theory on the matter of Magick as reality hacking, which I am certain you will tear to pieces, though that will be nothing but beneficial.

Magick has always been about reality, accepting it on its own terms and looking for ways to hack it. Some theories fall flat when subjected to experimentation and feedback while others may show promise. Utilitarianism will only you get so far in both ethics and magick: "If it works it is good" is just another form of nihilism.

First, let it be pointed out that physics, from Newtonian to Quantum, has always had in its mathematics a fudge mechanism, a coefficient applied to equations to enable the gravitational potential to mirror what we observe. This was Newtons' gravitational constant in classical mechanics, which is preserved through translation into quantum mechanics as the coefficient □, the gravitational potential, which is defined in part by Newton's constant. I promise I will cease all this math geekiness shortly and return to Magick and its political associations. Anyways, the gravitational potential has never lined up with the gravity required for observed cosmological velocities. More gravity is needed in order for the equations to work, hence the fudge factors. However, gravity is neither substance nor force, but a characteristic brought about by the curvature of spacetime. So, I thought, if we need more gravity, we only need a mathematical model with more curvature. I am working out the mathematics of adding two extra Reimannian dimensions (for philosophical purposes I will label them the two extra dimensions of time) to Einstein's geodesic equation to see if the resultant gravitational potentials equate as they should.

Sorry for all the math. Here's the interesting part: with the currently mass-accepted model of one dimension of time, the only time travel allowed is forward, usually, though not always,



at the standard rate of one second per second. With three dimensions of time, the many worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics becomes distinctly more manifold, and travel throughout time can be metaphorically likened to our own physical travel through the three dimensions of space; we can move horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. The difference here is that each possibility in spacetime is actualized in a timeline/worldline which is no longer a line, but a 3D shape.

This theory's implications on magick are that magick constitutes a reality hacking by spatial-temporal relocation of the magician on this 3D timesphere ("sphere" here, is used for simplicity, it could very well take any three-dimensional geometry). How this relocation is manifested is the topic of the multitudinous theories and practices of magick, some of which, as you pointed out, are more efficacious than others. My own practices often include the "if-I-believe-it-is-then-it-is" method using the power of ideas, but one must even doubt the verity of that. In short, I suppose, I really don't know what's going on, in physics or magic, but this is the best theory I have so far and experimentally I seem to be able to get Magick to work according to my Will within a high degree of probability…

isis

Isis,

Damn, it seems we agree on much. I also have studied time-travel quite a bit and have always felt that the math/physics infrastructure upholding only fast-forward to be dubious on a number of accounts, the most being the slipshod math of an already theoretical wormhole portal. I like your curving math and have never heard of that before and find your idea of spheres of possiblewheres and possiblewhens sensible on an intuitive level. My math is limited, and my attention for math is even less robust if that is possible, so I shall go with my gut and rely on your superior abilities.

Most importantly we believe that magick strives to act as a hack of the world. I think we probably agree what it might be is actually a hack of the subject's (and possibly more than one individual's when ritual magick is involved) consciousness. Whereas I am not an idealist (in the philosophical sense), I think when we talk about a hack in the world we are talking about a hack in reality, specifically subjective reality. This subjective change can take on world effects ... for example if I can access information and/or organize it new ways I can impact the world in real ways that would be un-understandable to everyone and possibly even myself... thus magick. Now let's go back to your multiple spheres, as you described them.

The question is: are these spheres porous in an informational sense? Is there the possibility that a sphere contains information that is applicable to our sphere but is not available in our sphere by normal means (maybe in fact not translatable at all in our sphere due to certain immutable laws)?

So if the spheres have different information that has no bearing on the others, then it is a useless premise for "how" magick works; however if there is information that might be relevant to

this sphere that we're in, even if that information is transitional due to the nature of "our" sphere, then magick could be a hack that would, by necessity, remain outside this sphere's science, since science must work on givens that are not subject to these types of transitional changes. It may also explain the peculiar traits of magick and the differing theories (often contradictory) of how the whole damn thing works and explain the important question: If magick works regularly and consistently then why would that not call into question the whole rational thought/science paradigm?

That was my thinking.

Thanks for the conversation,
Prof. Fether

Hello Professor,

I apologize for my delay in reply. Shakespeare, in *King Lear*, wrote that "the Prince of Darkness is a gentleman." It was also written by someone, somewhere, that a gentleman never tarries in his correspondences. From these statements, it can most certainly be inferred that I am not the Prince of Darkness…

Interestingly enough, while we are on the topic of magic as an ontological hack, this is precisely the conclusion I came to via my research on why various modern occult orders would utilize fascist elements and symbolism within their rituals. I believe they are merely adopting controversial paradigms and breaking taboos for the expansion to individual consciousness which these tools provide, and that they are not in actuality fascist.

To respond to your question, "are [the spheres] porous in an informational sense? Is there the possibility that a sphere contains information that is applicable to our sphere but is not available in our sphere by normal means (maybe in fact not translatable at all in our sphere due to laws)?" Yes. I theorize that, when an individual alters their consciousness through magick (or other means), they are affecting physical particles within their brain. Because all possibilities are actualized in this theory, each possibility has a location (in science fiction terminology these would be called parallel universes). So, when a particle's path differs from the path it usually takes ("usually," here, simply means the most probable next location, though, again, all paths are taken) to a less-traveled path, that shifts everything into a new world-sphere. Here, though, I am uncertain as to whether this shift is only present for the individual or for the whole universe. Also, this is where it starts to get paradoxical because there are multiple selves and multiple worlds. The most likely explanation is that there is the you who committed the magickal act and traveled to a different worldsphere and there is also the you who did nothing and just went with the flow, so to speak. So, yes, magick is a hack, a reality hack to transport the individual to a world more aligned with one's Will.

isis

Hello Isis,

Do not fret about not being a gentleman. I never broker with gentlemen, for they are never gentle and rarely men… I would like to clarify this idea of the "Ontological Hack," by the way a very pleasing term I think, so we move on with a shared conceptual framework.

First I have always been troubled with the idea of parallel universes. It seems to me that a universe where I am a trucker or president is just not very plausible due to the limitless congruencies that would need to occur for that to happen. In fact I find the whole thing a bit narcissistic, the old adage every decision creates multiple worlds that exist. All of these Philip K. Dick *Castle* worlds behave exactly or very closely to our world with just minor changes in the phenotypes. I guess I believe in a more Lovecraftian concept of truly alien worlds, where our laws, probabilities, etc. are structured radically differently. I am sure you are familiar with the little work *Flatland*, where a three-dimensional object floats momentarily through a two-dimensional world and exhibits properties that can only be roughly translated and understood. I believe magick and altered states of consciousness may be similar, thus explaining their transitional nature.

Now, let's say that information transfer is different in these "alien worlds." For example the Space-Time Array Law seems to be broken by some quantum bodies and just doesn't exist in our world. But if that law were true, we would be able to receive information from alien worlds, and ideas like clairvoyance, remote sensing, etc. become not only possible but probable. That doesn't mean it becomes normal or lasting, like most physical laws (say thermodynamics if you will). So you get info in a magical way, simply because the alien world that you access it from it is not unusual at all. This would seem to resolve the paradox of how come the world and its governing principles do not change so rapidly despite magick, altered states of consciousness, etc. These are transitional phenomena and often singular in the same way a three dimensional object passing through a two dimensional universe would only momentarily disrupt the Flatland. Where I feel most occult schools go wrong is they try to systematize the encounter when it is more like exploration since we may not be able to understand the alien laws of other worlds.

Those are my thoughts on the idea of various interacting spheres.

my best,
Fether

Hello Fether,

The "old adage," that every decision creates multiple worlds, is often misinterpreted, though it does conform to the mathematics. What is meant there by "decision" is not a decision in the macrocosmic sense; for example, my decision to drink a second cup of coffee right now is a macrocosmic decision. "Decision" refers to the quantum probability equations for the particles themselves. For example, let us suppose that Particle Qggf, a photon, is at Point A. Qggf has a range of possible locations it can be next—each of these is a "decision." Since there are many possible decisions at each point, Qggf can rapidly distance itself from Point A, or, depart and then return to the original time-"line" to which Point A belongs. However, since there are a great many

particles going all which ways at once, it takes a larger amount of them to impact larger changes in the macrocosm. So, yes, the universe where you are president is not very plausible, though, theoretically, it still does exist (and holy moley would that be an interesting one to visit!), it's just super far removed by lots of probability functions which effectively block it from occurring on the time-"line" on which consensus reality is happening. And Lovecraft's worlds do exist, I think they are just similarly far-removed, which would explain why only a few people can tap into them.

I suppose I should define what I think consensus reality is. Consensus reality is the path of least resistance against the quantum probability function. So, it is the most probable decision for each particle at each moment. However, this doesn't explain at all why consensus reality would take the appearance of this mess we deal with everyday.

I like your ideas on information transfer from "alien worlds." I have always thought that such phenomena as clairvoyance and telepathy were due to some type of quantum entanglement. How this works, precisely, I don't fully understand yet. That is, exactly which particles are becoming entangled to allow information transfer from alien worlds? Are they particles within the individual Magician's mind? For instance, could they possibly be the neurotransmitters or brainwaves which are altered during such magickal acts like meditation and ritual? Or are they particles outside the Magician—maybe the Magician's consciousness alteration effects the nearby physical plane, whose particles are already entangled with another, more "alien," realm? And you bring up a very valid point: how do we, and can we even, begin to systematize pathways or pathworkings through such a tangled mass of all-ness? I think certain paths are more efficient for certain localized areas, sort of like how the footsteps I take on one trail through the mountains are not the same footsteps I would take on a trail through the forest. But to say that there is only one path, or that one path is more efficient than others would be like limiting yourself to hiking the same trail everyday, instead of the vast infinite voids which are ours for the wandering.

isis

Hello Isis,

I get probability (even the quantum variety). That being said, it is hard for me to imagine that whole recognizable (to us here in this time-space line) worlds would exist. I studied and became a licensed hypnotherapist and studied with one of the best in the field, Dr. Koegel of Columbia University. We got to know the unconscious pretty well and what was so remarkable is that small changes in the conscious world have disproportionate effect on the "grammar" of the unconscious (at least the parts accessible through hypnosis). This seems to be similar to the Maimonides sleep studies (not just the highly important sleep telepathy studies but the entire studies) on the transmutable aspect of dream "architecture." My explorations in altered states of consciousness suggest that minor changes in set and setting can have huge and unknowable effects. All of this reminds me much of the recent research on emergence. I have started to play with the idea that magick, when it works which is very infrequent, is a lot like emergence.… Of course you cannot make emergence any more than you can invoke Asmodeus, but you can increase the probability of "something" happening.

My ideas.

Fether,

Although, in short, it would seem that the converse is also theoretically applicable, namely that through immense effort on the astral plane one can change the physical plane.

I once conducted an experiment to move rocks while astrally projecting to see if they moved in the physical realm. I had my roommate at the time, with whom I would conduct nightly dream experiments and rituals (they could also project and lucid dream), remain awake and watch a set of rocks laid out on a line of chalk, arranged by weight, to see which ones I could move. The experiment was devised because I lived in a building with barn doors outside the main house, and I had to leave the doors cracked at night so that I could get outside in astral form. The problem here being that it was much safer for me to keep my door shut and locked, as I had already had several break-ins. So we tried this experiment as a sort of out-of-body weight training exercise to see if I could eventually open the doors. I was able to move rocks which were about the size of the palm of my hand several feet, though the effort involved was backbreaking to say the least. I was tired and sore for days, not in my physical body, but in the other one which lives inside of it. Currently, a friend of mine and I are constructing an astral temple for rituals which can't be conducted anywhere in the physical realm safely and privately.

For some reason, my mind is trying to link all of this with post-structuralist anarchism. This is rather tangential, so it doesn't necessarily need to be pursued, but could an emergence theory of magick be utilized toward political means? Essentially, I think what I'm getting at, is could we evoke Panarchy? I suppose the probabilistic outcomes of system input would need to be detailed more precisely for that, which is the very problem we're currently dealing with—any single magickal theory is too dogmatic and religious to fully account for the observed spectrum of phenomena. Oh my, oh my. Are we ever going to understand anything?

isis

Good Evening Isis,

I just came back from work so my mind is firing a bit slow so I will cop out and use your missive to launch from if you do not mind terribly.

So, let me see if I have understood your view accurately: you're saying that little changes in this realm can cause vastly disproportionate changes in other realms.

I don't think that is what I said and am far too skeptical about the interplay (causation) of one plane to the next. If the rules are different and in fact "alien" I would doubt any impact in this realm would even have the most marginal influence on another.

That being said it is possible information (noise perhaps in one plane) could be shared with another and thus I guess some secondary impact could be imparted.

You said [and the editor cut out]: "Okay, I think maybe we're talking about the same phenomena with different terms. If tiny changes can cause bigger changes, and, as in emergence theory, a system's constituent parts can evolve into a whole which is larger than the sum of the parts, then is this not similar to tiny changes in the quantum realm leading to entirely new worlds to situate the changed factors?"

Yes and no. the first sentence is straightforward chaos theory (butterfly wings and all) assuming a regular and consensual paradigm or set. The second sentence is correct about my understanding of emergence. I must admit my quantum is not up to par but what I do know would not necessarily draw the last conclusion.

You also said [and the editor also cut]: "Let us suppose that magickis a form of strong emergence. The converse has often been suggested, that emergence is a form of magic: Mark A. Bedau observes: 'Although strong emergence is logically possible, it is uncomfortably like magic. How does an irreducible but supervenient downward causal power arise, since by definition it cannot be due to the aggregation of the micro-level potentialities?'"

That doesn't seem to follow. Some things like multipliers are already well studied and understandable given the current paradigms we have.... Nothing magical in that. What makes emergence interesting is unpredictability and its high failure rate.

Such causal powers would be quite unlike anything within our scientific ken. We can think of how software, or even circuits and how they are connected, can create phenomena that could not necessarily be parsed by just looking at the components. It's their connections, sequence, and interplay with a complex and dynamic environment that gives rise to an unpredictable emergence. It may not be a regular part of mathematics, but I do not think it is outside of science.

This indicates how they will discomfort reasonable forms of materialism.

You said: "Only the basest understanding of materialism (not that I am a materialist). The question which now arises foremost in my mind is, how can we manipulate the constituents to reliably produce emergent results in the whole? And if emergence is a type of ordered chaos not typified by the input variables, then is this even possible?"

Yes and no. I think we can stack the deck but reality could still draw a winning hand. Card counting can increase your odds but cannot guarantee you will beat the house. I believe currently we only know a handful of the principles but more are being uncovered everyday.... That doesn't mean there will be some recipe for emergence. It will only reduce the failure rate a bit and that can be very important.

You said: "Also, you mentioned that minute changes in the conscious world can have huge effects on the unconscious. I have also noticed this. But, to reverse the question again, can phenomena produced in the unconscious realm have similarly disproportionate effects on the conscious realm?"

That was the idea of subliminal messaging and other similar techniques that hope to use the pounding engines of the unconsciousness to manipulate the conscious. I think it is not that easy. If you take Freud's iceberg metaphor, the below is so large it takes great effort to have an impact. It is also glacially slow, especially after childhood. You are in fact rewriting over grooves as opposesed to making them in the first place, thus requiring more work than the original. This makes evolutionary sense if you think about it.

You said: "There are also such documented efforts on the utilization of astral forms and symbolism to effect the mundane world as those of E.A. Koetting, in his book *Baneful Magick*, which I'm not exactly comfortable outlining the methodologies of in anything that is potentially going to be published."

Moving from the realms of the mind to other realms is a bit tricky. Affecting the conscious or unconscious is one thing but moving outside the skull presents all sorts of other problems—namely the dependence on various laws that are not existent in a purely mental sphere. That doesn't mean it is not possible, but I think it is like your experience with the rock. In your body you could move a rock the size of your palm quite easily with no ill effects. But when you translate abstraction into materiality it is not the rock that suffers, it is the mind that is not used to such impositions of this realm. Terrance McKenna believes the "life of the mind" is actually alien to this world and its rules and must learn to adapt to them. Digital faces the same dilemma: when it is in the world of material-free abstraction it does remarkably well with limited resources and it can do that type of work endlessly with no deterioration. But move digital into the world of the Ford auto plant and it gets harder, requiring tons of input, constant recalibration, and other similar problems. In a digital model or simulation of an auto plant it can make virtual cars all day perfectly. Translation is always imperfect and requires quite a bit of input. So when we translate Will/Spirit? Whatever into reality we should expect imperfection, redundancy of resources, steep learning curves, and deterioration of effect. Actually most magicians and occultists recognize this but never explore the reasoning behind it. I believe the alchemists and other occultists that put so much emphasis on purification and bodily health makes sense, even if they do not know why. That is also why I think Crowley's magical manipulations in the earlier part of his life were so impressive but the latter stuff was pretty weak—because his body in a sense was just worn down, despite him gaining more and more knowledge in passing years.

That is all I can wring out of this poor brain tonight.✳

Fether

Magick is a hack, a reality hack to transport the individual to a world more aligned with one's Will.



ROSA APÁTRIDA



Rosa Apátrida (which translates to "Stateless Flower") is a new band out of Brooklyn, an anarcho dark wave trio that sings in Spanish, English, and Russian. Their lyrics are themed around animal liberation and anti-fascism, and their live set is energetic and highly danceable. What more could I want out of music? Accompanying photos taken at a January 2011 show by Margaret Killjoy.

Graceless: *Why dark wave? What is dark wave to you?*

JJ: Dark wave is a darker version of the forms of electronic music that blossomed in the late 1970s and 1980s, especially in Europe. We are influenced by many political post-punk groups, french coldwave music, the Manchester Factory sound, as well as the Movida Madrileña groups from Spain, early industrial and EBM music, and as newer minimal wave and electro groups. We come from a mostly punk background, which comes across in our music, but the creation of electronic music has given us much more room to evolve in more interesting forms of expression.

Niko: Apart from the musical genre that JJ already explained, for me dark wave and dark music and art in general are forms of the most profound and intimate expressions of the human being. Expression that comes from the heart and contrasts with the dual reality of the world—life and death, lies and truth—the constant search of something different, a connection with nature, a lost path inside of us.

Graceless: *What do you wish to communicate with your music? What do you expect from your audience, if anything?*

Elektra: I wish to communicate about the state of barbarism and self-destruction that humanity is in, and call for the abolition of all forms of oppression, and against anthropocentrism. Since I am a visual artist, I don't feel the necessity to make art through music because I already have that outlet with fine art. I see the band as a form of activism and I like to write poetic libertarian [note that the word "libertarian" is used in the original sense rather than referring to its common use in American politics] lyrics, relating to, but not limited to animal, earth, and human liberation. Niko and I have been very interested in veganism and animal rights since we were kids, so naturally we support the end of earth and animal exploitation and capitalism and support equality between species, hence I try to be somewhat didactic with what I write, but not write in a way that is already chewed and digested. I keep in mind that I am writing for a purpose. I also mix my personal experiences in to what I write, so often the lyrics have double meaning. The three of us have a lot of political and musical affinity, so we tend to like and appreciate whatever the other does. From the audience I really have the desire to transform apathy through dance and being part of the cultural arm of revolution in a ludic manner.

Niko: I think Elektra said everything here. I can add that we would love that when people hear our music and feel touched and inspired by the sound and the lyrics that they become active and start their own political music projects.

JJ: Our music and lyrics are relatively dark, sometimes depressing, sometimes angry, often nostalgic. Our songs deal with political, social, and personal themes. It was a conscious decision as we started playing music together that our music and lyrics would have a revolutionary content. We are all people who, though coming from different political backgrounds, feel that the anarchist/autonomous struggle is such a part of our life that it would be impossible to work on a project like Rosa Apátrida without that struggle taking a primary role in our project.

We have a love of music and creating sounds, songs, and beats in itself but we also see the creation of music as part of a revolutionary project where our lyrics, music, and our performances are a means of transmitting our rage, and our desire

for the total liberation of all beings, human and non human, and the creation of a revolutionary moment here and now.

We hope that our audience understands the intersection between the creative process and the political message. We don't want our songs to be mere sloganeering and we hope that the music we create is as important as our message.

I personally still have a naïve optimism about the role that music and subcultures can play in helping to build or participate in an insurrectionary movement. Obviously, on their own, subcultures and culture tend to just create small scenes that are easily recuperated into mainstream capitalist culture, but often, when linked to a larger struggle, subcultures and music can build a true culture of resistance that can in a best case scenario expand beyond a stagnant scene and become something larger.

There are moments in history where there are interesting intersections of this type, parts of the global 1960s and early 1970s counterculture, the German autonomen in the 1980s, to some extent anarcho-punk in the mid-1980s in the UK, the revolutionary hip hop collectives in Chile…. On their own however most subcultural currents are a dead end, and that is why we must build larger, generalized, and explicitly a/political cultures of resistance.

On their own, subcultures and culture tend to just create small scenes that are easily recuperated into mainstream capitalist culture, but often, when linked to a larger struggle, subcultures and music can build a true culture of resistance.

Graceless: *Tell me about the band.*

JJ: We formed in March of 2010. Niko and I were part of a anarchist coldwave DJ collective called the Ice Age. We decided, together with Elektra, to create our own music. At first we began experimenting mainly digitally, now we have moved to analog gear: keyboards and drum machines.

Elektra: I was born in Odessa, Ukraine and I grew up in a hospital in a rural area in Colombia and then in Bogotá, Colombia where I met Niko. Since the two of us were traveling constantly, our punk band projects were always short-lived, so Niko was composing music on his computer and I was collaborating with lyrics. JJ invited Niko to DJ in the Ice Age, and we found out that the three of us wanted to do the same kind of thing, that we had similar musical tastes and politics. We wanted to make dark, political, danceable music that would reach more people. We gathered to rehearse in our apartment with JJ and we had a great connection, we really enjoyed what we where creating. JJ also speaks Spanish and has an understanding of Latino-American culture, so that already created a natural empathy.

Niko: I am from Bogotá, Colombia. I started with music when I was a kid and learned by myself. I have always liked dark (goth, industrial, noise) and political-punk music.

Graceless: *What are your influences? Not just music, but art, literature, whatever?*

JJ: Much dark music—death rock, darkwave, industrial, cold wave etc.—has an ultra right-wing subset with groups that use fascist and neo-nazi imagery supposedly for shock value, (Death in June and NON for example) claiming it as avant-garde experimentalism while in reality perpetuating and helping to further an unorthodox yet right-wing ideology.

Rosa Apátrida is explicitly, and militantly, anti-fascist. We aim to reclaim the dark, the nihilistic, and the negationist, as well as the joyful and hopeful, for the ultra left. Living in dark times, as we do today, our music is a reflection of our rage, of our despair and most importantly of our desires for the possibilities that we can create together as we destroy the present horror we live in.

Elektra: The pain of existence and the disappointment in the world influences me, and that urge to fight, which is born from profound indignation.

For Rosa Apátrida's lyrics, in literature my main influence has been Argentine poet Alejandra Pizarnik, who died from suicide at 29. She was from a Soviet immigrant family living in Argentina, a similar situation to mine; I have always felt like a foreigner everywhere, never at home. Also Kropotkin's *Anarchist Morality* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. I am also influenced by Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* and *Pom Poko*, particularly for Rosa Apátrida. In music, I also enjoy classical music and participating in noise performances.

Niko: I like cacophony and experimental noise, also concrete music. On the other hand I like Medieval and Reinassance music, especially poetry and profane and pagan chants.

I am also influenced by autonomous struggle in Latin-America and Latino-American poets such as Bendetti, Estanislao Zuleta, and Pizarnik and Latino-American art with political subject matter.

What influences me the most is seeing this dark putrid world full of inequality and destruction, where the only constant is inequality between humans and nature and between human and non-human animals.

I live in darkness but I search for the light. Being dark is not an option, it is the way it is; and singing about that is singing about reality. Through my music I want to fight. This is my struggle. I don't search to live in a dark cave; I would like to have tranquility and live running with wild animals in harmony with nature.✳

Rosa Apátrida can be found online at ROSAAPATRIDA.TUMBLR.COM *and* WWW.MYSPACE.COM/ROSAAPATRIDA.



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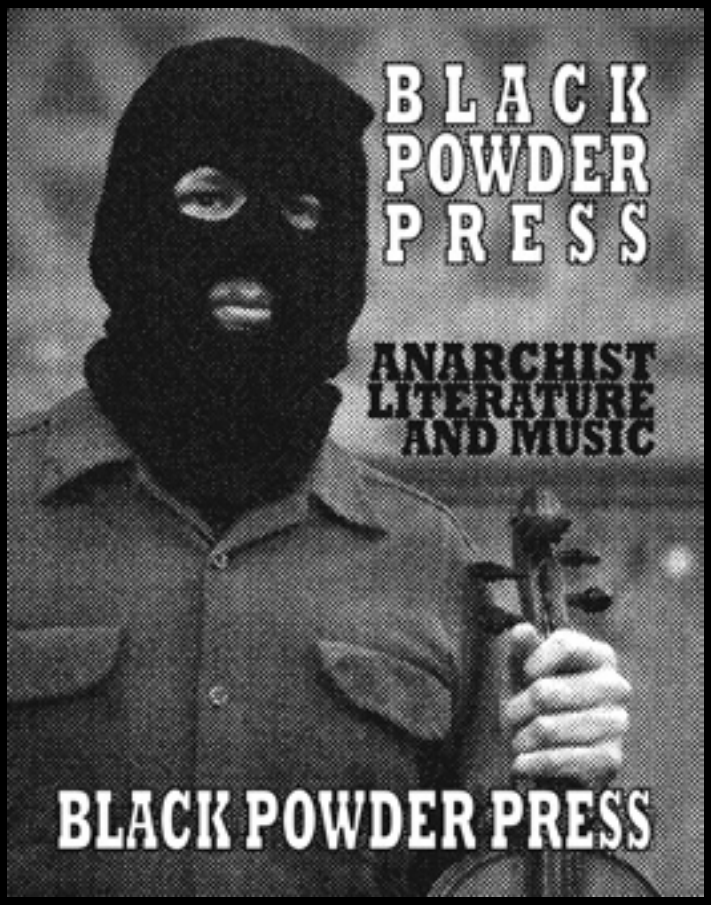


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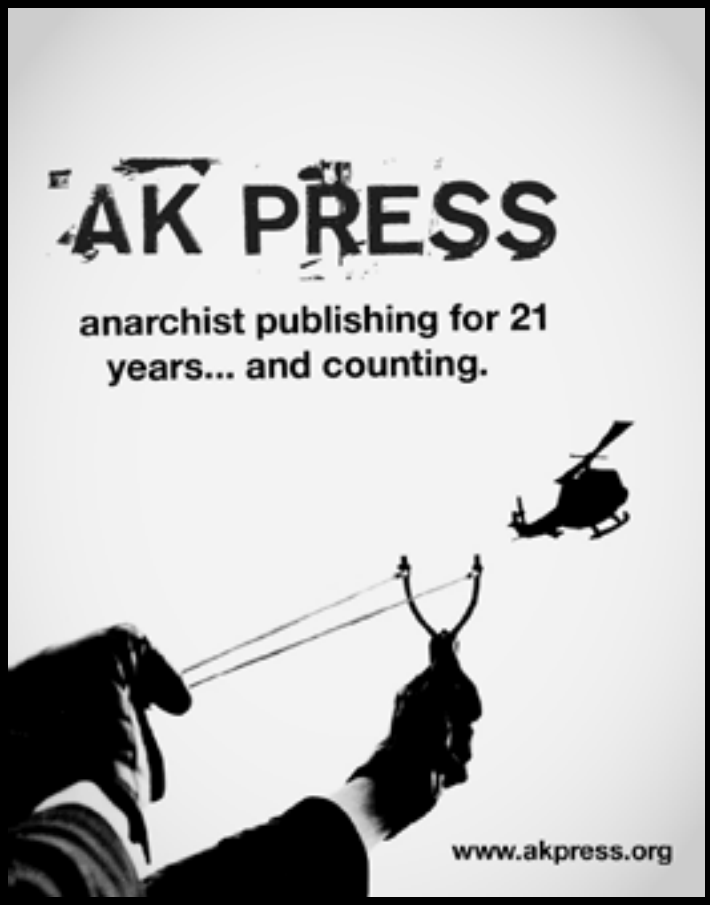


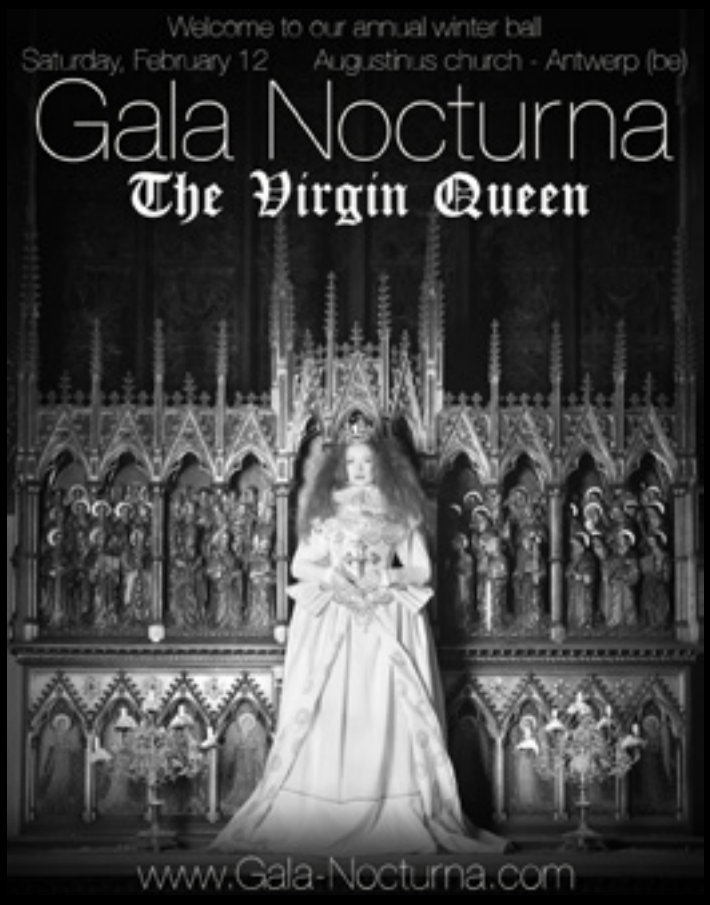
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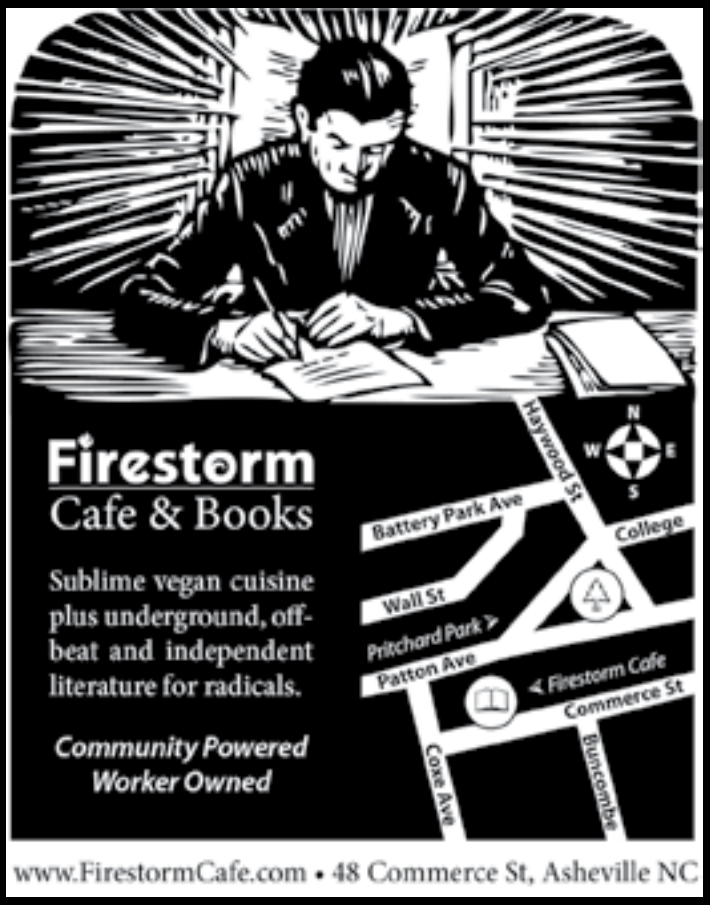
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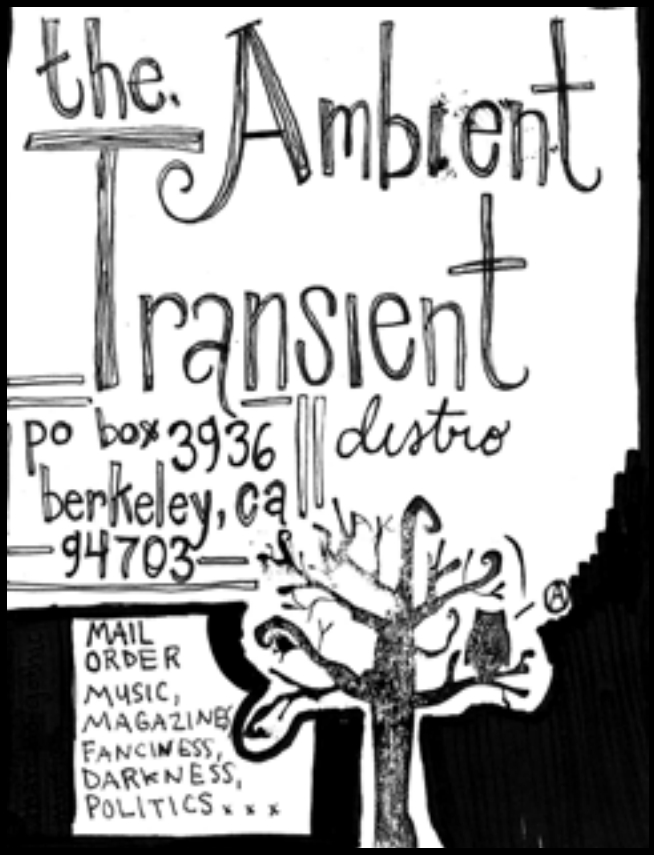

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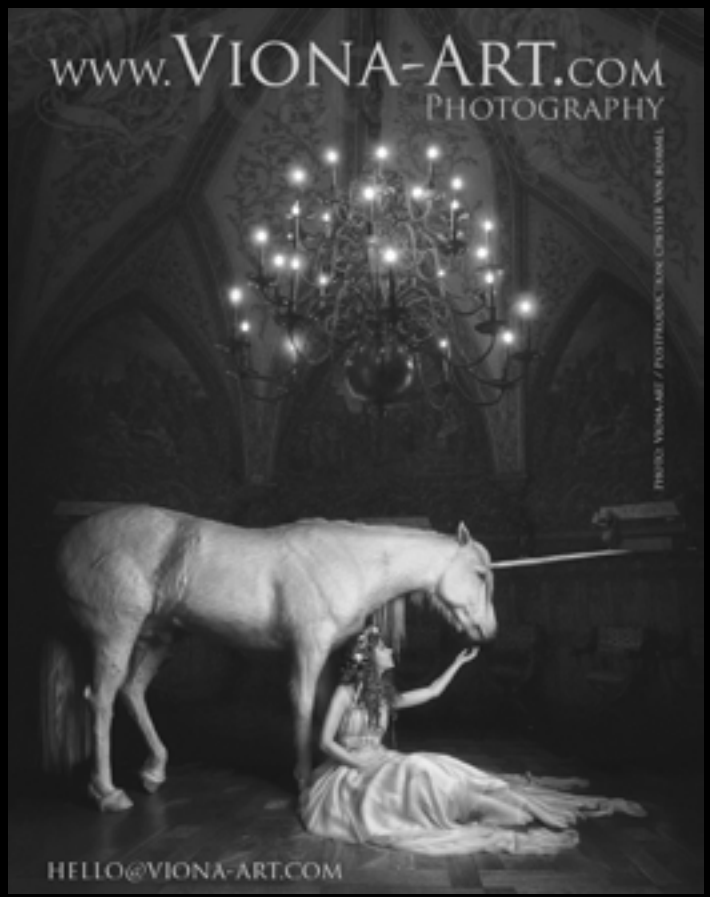
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A multicamera shoot of a live dj mix [2 turntables & 2 cd -dj units] featuring a wide variety of Skinny Puppy music. It will be available as a free download/DVD. Coming Spring 2011.

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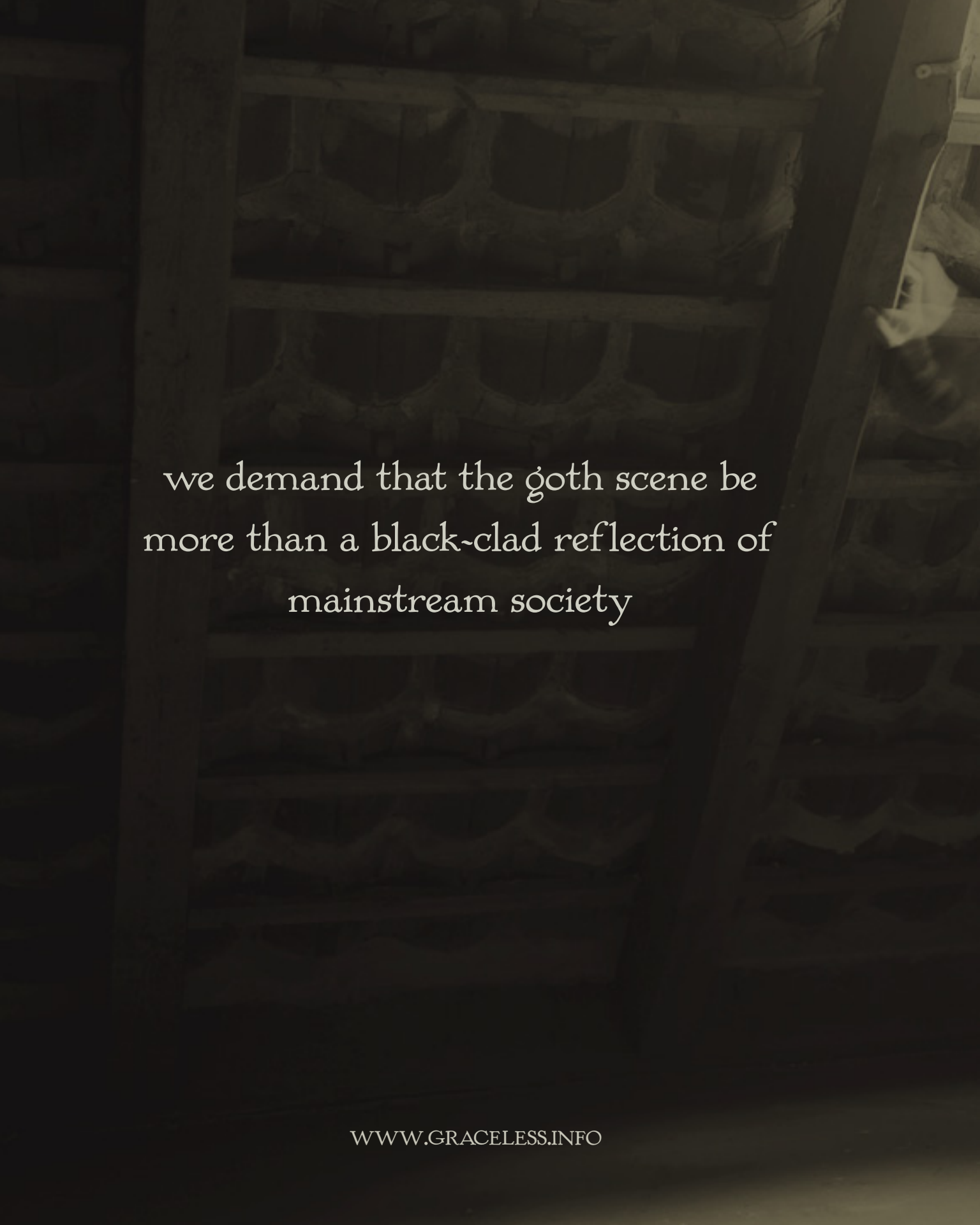
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WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD
COMIC BY THE SOMNULATORIUM
YOU WERE TOLD THAT, ONE DAY, THE ANTI-CHRIST WOULD COME.
72
INSTEAD, MANY CAME.
Foreclosed
Worst Unemployment since Great Depression
Scientists warn, polluting industries receive too much financial support
FORTUNATELY FOR YOU, THERE WAS FACEBOOK
facebook

And these words shall then become
Like Oppressions thundered doom,
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again—again—again.

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fall'n on you:
Ye are many—they are few.

"The Masque of Anarchy"
Percy Bysshe Shelley


we demand that the goth scene be
more than a black-clad reflection of
mainstream society